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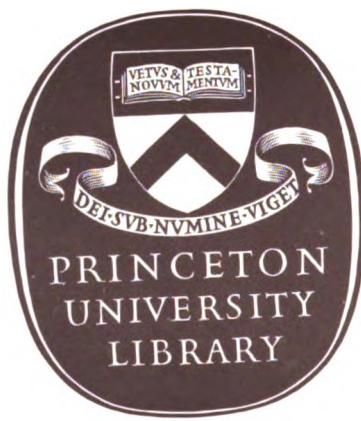
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*Flying & Sport
in
East Africa*

Leo Walmsley



The Aeronautical Collection of
Arthur L. Newman
Class of 1923

Cape May, N.J.
Aug 1899
New Jersey

Two species of
Mysticetes
seen today.

Flying and Sport in East Africa



Flying and Sport in East Africa

BY

LEO WALMSLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR EDWARD NORTHEY
K.C.M.G., C.B.

GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF BRITISH EAST AFRICA,
AND HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR ZANZIBAR

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

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1920

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TO
MY OWN DEAR MOTHER,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT,
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE attempted in the following chapters to give a record of my adventures as an airman and amateur sportsman during two years' service with the R.F.C. in East Africa.

Compared with that of the infantry, ours was a soft enough job. There were no enemy aircraft to worry us, and few anti-aircraft guns. Usually we had comfortable camps, plenty of good food, water, and medicine. While our poor Tommies were floundering in the swamps or staggering across the scorching waterless veldt, we were flying in clear air above—well fed, clean, healthy, comparatively safe. While they were rationed on a small stick of sugar-cane per man per day (as for several weeks they were), we were feeding on the products of Fortnum and Mason, grumbling when we had to take water with our whisky instead of Schweppes.

That we had certain dangers and difficulties to

face, from inferior engines and the peculiar atmospheric conditions, will be gathered from my narrative; but these, compared with the discomforts, privations, and sufferings of the infantryman, fighting for ever in the hellish bush against a cunning unseen enemy, battling against malaria, dysentery, thirst, and starvation, without tobacco, whisky, or mail, usually without the barest medical comforts, fade into insignificance.

Putting on one side all personal considerations, however, I think I am justified in maintaining that the work of the R.F.C. deserves a little more consideration than it has received from the various British authors (one of them authoritative) who have written on the East African Campaign.

From the beginning the aeroplane was regarded with disfavour by the Dutch General Staff. Tied down to a strategy which at best was only that of a South African negro chief, and which rarely resulted in anything more than "manceuvering" the enemy out of positions which other exigencies had already determined him to abandon, they looked upon the aeroplane as an expensive toy, useless either as a substitute for or an auxiliary to cavalry, particularly Dutch cavalry.

For many months our reconnaissance reports

were frankly discredited. Thus at Salaita Hill, a line of rocks described by airmen as a "dummy" trench, and clearly shown as such on an aerial photograph, was bombarded continuously; while the real trenches, likewise indicated by us, were left severely alone. In the same engagement South African infantry was led straight into a line of carefully concealed trenches which Inglis, one of our observers, had accurately mapped and described some hours before.

There was trouble even within our own gates. Our organisation was bad. Nominally we were a South African squadron, actually a large percentage of the officers were East African settlers or ex-civil servants; or like Pawson, the Old 'Un, Mac, and myself, transferred from British squadrons. This led to an extraordinary amount of jealousy, favouritism, and ill-feeling. The East Africans and ourselves were "officially" regarded as outsiders. Initiative, so vital a thing in the flying service, if shown by any but the Dutch, was promptly stamped upon.

Bell, a famous East African hunter, the most brilliant, daring, and useful pilot in the squadron, was "manœuvred out" because of these very qualities. The A.D.C. and the "Old 'Un" followed

suit by the end of the first year. No photographic officer had been sent out with the squadron. At Mbuyuni certain circumstances would have made it possible for Mr Cherry Kearton, the world-famous photographer and one of the pioneers of aerial photography, to be permanently attached in this capacity. The appointment was not made; instead, our photographic department was placed in charge of a certain South African "observer" (?) too heavy to fly, and whose knowledge of photography as a science was *nil*. Naturally the squadron did not take a single decent photograph from that time until the same officer was given a higher and more lucrative post—at a greatly increased cost to the British taxpayer.

I have no personal grievance in the matter, but it was exasperating at times to realise what harm we might have dealt the enemy had it not been for this state of affairs; had every officer been actuated by the same spirit of unselfishness and patriotism that enabled Von Lettow Vorbeck to fight one of the most gallant campaigns in military history.

Later on the military situation demanded that the squadron should split into flights, each operating directly under the orders of British Divisional

Generals. Free from the clogging restraint and red tape of R.F.C. headquarters, we were then able to take a more active part in the campaign —to fly low, to bomb the enemy whenever we saw him, to carry extra petrol and extend the range of our reconnaissances,—in short, to take those ordinary risks which war demands, and which for an obscure reason we were not allowed to take before.

My object in mentioning this matter is to point a moral, if a young man may be allowed to do so. That the act of patriotism does not end with donning the King's uniform in time of war; rather should it be a perpetual sacrifice of self, a steadfast devotion to a noble principle, a glorious unswerving endeavour—*defeat of the enemy*. He who in war takes up arms for his Motherland must prepare to sacrifice all—possessions, love, life itself, in full fulfilment of his vow; and he who permits a personal consideration—ambition, jealousy, or gain—to divert him from this purpose, is guilty of a blacker crime than he who sleeps at his post.

Did the R.F.C. in East Africa justify its existence? I maintain that it did, in spite of

the fact that its operations were cramped by inferior engines, by an unbusinesslike equipment supply service from England, by lack of understanding and sympathy from the General Staff, and by our own unfortunate organisation. Time after time we were successful in spotting the enemy's camps and positions lying in the path of our infantry, in giving reliable details as to the nature of the country through which our forces were to march, in establishing communication between the far-flung units of the command, in bombing the enemy's concealed positions and porters' camps.

General Von Lettow Vorbeck, in 'My East African Reminiscences,' constantly refers to the operations of aircraft. In discussing the site of trenches at Kissaki, he says, "by bombs from aircraft, he could have made it intolerable for us to remain in the *boma*." Describing his stay at Tuliani (Turiani), he relates how "the English annoyed us mostly by aircraft bombs, against which we could do nothing. A hut of valuable documents was set alight." Later he says, "a large number of aircraft appeared over Ndessa, against whose bombs we were defenceless, and some severe wounds resulted." When towards the end of 1918 he crossed the Rovuma, and our flying

operations ceased, his relief is expressed in the following words: "The aircraft which usually followed our marches was absent, and no bombs fell in our camps."

Several white German prisoners spoke to me of the moral effect of the aeroplanes, which caused the desertion of thousands of askaris and porters; and they were unanimous in the opinion that had we had a dozen squadrons instead of one, the campaign would have been finished in 1917.

.
I could not conclude this preface without paying a tribute to the N.C.O.'s and men of my squadron, whose work under the most trying circumstances, climatic and otherwise, was uniformly excellent. Dear old Pawson, "the kindest-hearted and most popular man in the squadron," who died recently from disease contracted in Daresalam, Bertram and Steenekampe, who also paid the price; Batten, the most popular of Adjutants, Mac, Creed, Bell, the Old 'Un, Carey-Thomas, Emmett, Hewitt, Collander, Dickson, The A.D.C., Sergeant-Major Pearson, Van der Spuy; and in Nyassaland, Turnbull, Walker, Kirkwood, Dauber, and dear old "Hodge"—the names of these men will always conjure up for me the happiest of memories.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
	PREFACE	vii
	INTRODUCTION	xix
I.	THE FIRST AERODROME	1
II.	THE BIG PUSH STARTS	14
III.	MALARIA	27
IV.	MBAGUI AND BACK TO MOMBASA	40
V.	BACK TO THE FRONT	47
VI.	NEARING THE CENTRAL RAILWAY	54
VII.	THE RAILWAY AND BEYOND	63
VIII.	MOROGORO	77
IX.	TO THE MGETA VALLEY	87
X.	MIXED SPORTS AT TULO	95
XI.	A FLIGHT TO THE RUFIDI	109
XII.	KILWA AND THE TRAGEDY OF CLOWE	120
XIII.	A TWENTIETH-CENTURY FATHER CHRISTMAS	132
XIV.	THE RUFIDI REVISITED	142
XV.	THE TOLL OF THE TROPICS	147
XVI.	THROUGH THE RUAHA FLOODS	154

Contents

XVII. ACROSS CENTRAL AFRICAN TABLELAND	175
XVIII. THE HUNT FOR MAJOR WINTGENS	206
XIX. LAKE NYASSA AND BEYOND	213
XX. FIRST FLIGHT OVER THE LAKE, AND ULYSSES UP TO DATE	239
XXI. THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE OF THE BICYCLE	245
XXII. HOW WE SETTLED OLD MATAKA	250
XXIII. THE CURSE OF THE CROW	256

**THE HUMOURS OF BIG AND LITTLE GAME
SHOOTING.**

I. MY FIRST LION HUNT	269
II. SOME SMALLER EXPERIENCES	282
III. MY SECOND LION HUNT	289
IV. AN ELEPHANT HUNT	297

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

MAGANGA, THE AUTHOR'S SERVANT	<i>Facing p.</i>	46
THE OLD BEE, TAKEN JUST BEFORE WE SET OUT ON OUR RECORD FLIGHT FROM FORT JOHNSTON	"	46
DENSE BUSH SEEN FROM AN AEROPLANE	"	88
SUNSET OVER DARESALAM, TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR	"	88
MOUTH OF THE RUFIFI RIVER	"	112
A VIEW ON THE COAST, SHOWING REMARKABLE CLEARNESS OF SEA	"	112
COCOANUT PLANTATIONS AND NATIVE CULTIVATIONS SEEN FROM THE AIR	"	124
TYPICAL FOREST SEEN FROM THE AIR	"	124
A CURIOUS EFFECT. WINDING RIVER SEEN FROM AEROPLANE	"	130
THE WINDING MATANDU RIVER, NEAR KILWA, WHERE CLOWE LANDED	"	130
THE AUTHOR'S SAFARI CROSSING THE FAMOUS RUCHA BRIDGE	"	166
A PAIR OF BABY LEOPARDS THAT BECAME THE SQUADRON MASCOT	"	166

xviii List of Illustrations.

THE COASTAL REGION OF A TYPICAL AFRICAN RIVER,	
SHOWING MANGROVES AND FOREST	<i>Facing p.</i> 172
A GERMAN STEAMER LYING IN THE RUFIFI RIVER	" 200
A TYPICAL GERMAN FORTIFIED CAMP	" 200

M A P S.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF KILIMANJARO AREA	" 10
BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF USAMBARA-DARESALAM AREA	" 70
BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF RUFIFI AREA	" 112
BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE NYASSA-KILWA ROAD	" 224

INTRODUCTION.

MR WALMSLEY'S narrative will be read with thrilling interest, not only by those who wish to learn something of the conditions under which flying was carried out over the wilds of East and Central Africa, but also by those who enjoy reading of sport and travel in new lands.

Few, indeed, who have not seen the country can picture the charm and fascination of the scenes which the writer so well describes.

Magnificent mountain-ranges and craters of extinct volcanoes rise sheer out of great rolling plains of grass and bush over which hundreds of thousands of wild animals roam: primeval forest skirts the steep rocky sides of streams which carry torrential rains to the sea or to the big lakes. Flights over this beautiful country are simply and truly described by Mr Walmsley.

He began the campaign under General Smuts in British East Africa, flew all over the vast Tanganyika territory (late G.E.A.), and finished under my command south of Lake Nyassa. He and his flight - commander, Captain Hodgkinson, M.C., were among the bravest of our brave airmen. If they were not daily facing the dangers of enemy aircraft and guns, they encountered other odds every time they flew.

Aerodromes were few and far between, and distances were enormous: reconnaissances were often required of enemy stations, possibly 300 miles away, with the certainty of a crash on rocky hillside or thorn - scrub plateau should anything go wrong during the journey. A forced landing, even in our own territory, might take place a hundred miles or more from help: a night might be spent in lion - infested bush or fever - haunted swamp.

I never agreed with those writers on the East African campaign who have suggested that, owing to the wildness of the country and density of the bush, aeroplanes were of little use. Each flight was made with a definite object which was generally fulfilled, as is shown in the following pages. For making sketch-maps of unsur-

veyed country, for obtaining details of topography, mountains, rivers, swamps, and other military obstacles, for bombing and otherwise directly attacking the enemy's camps or porter convoys, and for keeping up communication between the wide-spread units of a command, the aeroplane fully justified its use. Those who contemplate flights over Africa should find Mr Walmsley's experience of the greatest value.

E. N.

3rd March 1920.

Flying and Sport in East Africa.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST AERODROME.

MBUYUNI is pronounced Imbewni, and it means the place of an ostrich; it was therefore quite appropriate that Mbuyuni should be the first of the R.F.C. aerodromes in East Africa.

It is situated just on the British side of the international boundary, in the centre of the undulating bush-clad plain that spreads from the foot of Kilimanjaro, north-eastwards to the Uganda railway.

The Squadron to which I belonged arrived there by train late in the afternoon of February 1st, 1916, after a hot and tiring journey from the coast. We were led at once to our camping-ground, a large thorn-fenced square, just



2 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

within the strongly defended perimeter of the main camp, and there we were left to shift for ourselves. We had no tents, and so with due philosophy we spread our valises on the ground, which from the entomological point of view promised to be of interest. Fortunately we had in the Squadron several "old" East Africans, and soon the various mess baskets were sorted out, a roaring camp-fire made, and a rough but very acceptable meal prepared.

Before turning in an incident occurred that to some degree disturbed our peace of mind for the night. Our fire had been built near to one of the enormous termite-heaps found everywhere in this country which possess as a rule several large exits the size of a rabbit-hole. Exasperated by the suffocating fumes of the dampish wood, suddenly there emerged from one of these holes an enormous snake about ten feet long, and as thick as one's arm. The native cook, who was busy stirring the contents of a saucepan over the fire, caught sight of this horrifying reptile, and letting out an awful blood-curdling shriek, bolted as though the devil himself had suddenly appeared, shaping a headlong course through the mass of pots, pans, bottles and

glasses, that littered the ground. The overturned pan naturally extinguished our sole source of light, and there we were in the dark with that beastly snake wriggling about in goodness knows what direction. Each one of us thought he could feel it crawling about his legs, and never was there a more utterly panic-stricken crowd of grown-up people. It took nearly a week's rum ration to restore the *morale* of the company, and we had just arrived at the stage where one begins to tell the others "what a darned good joke it had been," when a piercing howl from the direction of the servants' quarters fairly made our hair stand on end. Seizing whatever weapon happened to be nearest to hand, we gallantly rushed to the rescue, and found Jones, our head servant, in a state of collapse. In vivid but highly descriptive Cockney, he told us that he was just getting into bed when "he put his hand right on it."

After a considerable amount of volunteering we stood round with our spades and bayonets, while one of us very gingerly raised the blanket, and there, nestling ever so comfortably underneath, was—an empty beer bottle!

4 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

As the night dragged on we had ample opportunities for studying the zoological and nocturnal wonders of East Africa.

The whole place swarmed with ants, and although they appeared to be of a harmless species, one never felt certain that it was not a centipede or a scorpion crawling across one's chest. The buzzing of the beetles and the chirping of countless crickets was almost deafening, and loud above their unmelodious din came the occasional roar of a lion, and the more frequent wail of the hyæna. Jackals, frogs, grass-hoppers, and various smaller fry each contributed to this wild and primitive concert, which, strange to say, quickly lulled me into a deep and dreamless sleep.

.
It took several days to bring up the aeroplanes from Mombasa, unpack them from their wooden cases, and erect them ready for flight. The need for aerial reconnaissance behind the enemy's lines was hourly becoming more urgent, and as soon as the first machine was ready we were ordered out.

I shall never forget that first flight. The performance of the machine on its trial trip had

been anything but satisfactory, and as I happened to be the lightest observer with the squadron I was chosen for the job. The pilot, Captain Creed, was also a featherweight, but in spite of this we cleared the trees at the end of the aerodrome by inches only, and it was nearly half an hour before we reached a height of six hundred feet.

The view was extraordinarily interesting. The plain was much more open than we had at first imagined, for between the dense patches of bush were grassy glades dotted with solitary baobabs and acacias. Some of these open spaces were literally brown with game, one of them was a herd of at least two hundred eland, and numerous odd groups of gazelle, hartebeeste, zebra, and giraffe were to be seen on the game paths which intersected the bush like the veins of a leaf. These paths seem to converge on a small water-hole, where a couple of rhinos were disporting themselves. The noise of our engine drove them terror-stricken into the bush.

The scenery was magnificent. At the western extremity of the plain rose the mighty slopes of Kilimanjaro, its highest peaks floating on a great bank of cloud, its snow-fields and glaciers

6 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

aglow in the evening sunshine. Farther south the ragged cliffs and ridges of the Parè Hills leapt up from the plain, dark and portentous, for they formed the natural barrier between the British and the German Armies, and behind them lay the vital Tanga-Moschi Railway, which later became the main objective of General Smuts' Big Push.

Our orders were to locate a German force which was supposed to be marching on Mbuyuni. A squadron of horse and a few armoured cars had been sent out to engage it, and although we had little difficulty in spotting our own people—looking like so many ants creeping over the veldt—we saw no signs of the Hun. All the herds of game that we saw, however, were feeding peacefully, which certainly would not have been so had the enemy been anywhere near.

Turning now to the foot of the Parè Hills we flew over Lake Jipe, whose muddy, swampy waters swarm with crocodiles and hippos. A forced landing here would have been anything but a pleasant adventure, and I heaved a sigh of relief when we saw the land beneath us once more. We soon struck the main “road” (a path,

to be exact) that leads from Mbuyuni to Taveta and thence into German East Africa. This road was the key to the present military position, and was strongly defended by the Huns at Taveta and at Salaita, a small hill about fourteen miles west of Mbuyuni.

We had no difficulty in identifying Salaita Hill with its elaborate system of trenches and entanglements. Machine-guns and rifles flashed as we passed over at a thousand feet, and although I thought I could hear the bullets whizzing past, none hit us. It was very annoying having no means of retaliation, and as a small consolation I pulled out my Colt automatic and emptied the magazine at the hill. In an official *communiqué* some time later a gifted German journalist described how Salaita Hill had been attacked by an aeroplane with heavy machine-gun fire; there had been no casualties. Most annoying we thought.

The engine, which had been "missing" badly throughout the reconnaissance, stopped completely a quarter of a mile from the aerodrome; but we managed to glide in all right, and my pilot made a perfect landing. Later we heard that the alleged German force was only a small

8 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

party of our scouts who had been seen by their own comrades. This serves to illustrate one of the many difficulties of the campaign: German troops wore practically the same uniform as our own, and it was impossible to distinguish between them at a few hundred yards. From the air the problem was even greater, and an airman had to think twice before he dropped his bombs.

During the next few days more machines were erected, and frequent reconnaissances were made over the enemy's lines. The fortifications at Salaita and Taveta were sketched, photographed, and bombed whenever possible; although bombs were of little use against these carefully-made trenches, and it was only occasionally, when we caught a small body of Huns in the open, that we had any fun.

At Taveta we had to be extremely careful not to harm any of the native villages. The Wa-Taveta were friendly towards the British, in common with practically every tribe in East Africa, and they were patiently looking forward to the day when they would be released from the cruel tyranny and oppression of the Germans.

We were not permitted to bomb a wood occupied by the enemy, because on certain trees were hung the skulls of defunct members of the Wa-Taveta, the fall of which would bring bad luck to the tribe.

Sometimes our reconnaissances took us well up the slopes of Kilimanjaro, where the Huns had several outposts, one of them perched on the lip of an enormous extinct crater, now full of water. This crater-lake, known as Chala, actually contains crocodiles, although it is many hundred feet above the level of the nearest river—the Lumi.

The heat bumps and “pockets” at first were not quite so bad as we had anticipated. In the early morning and late evening the atmosphere is as steady as it is at home; but after 9 A.M. there is a certain amount of liveliness, particularly noticeable near the ground and under clouds. Later on in the campaign I formed a very wholesome respect for these unpleasant phenomena.

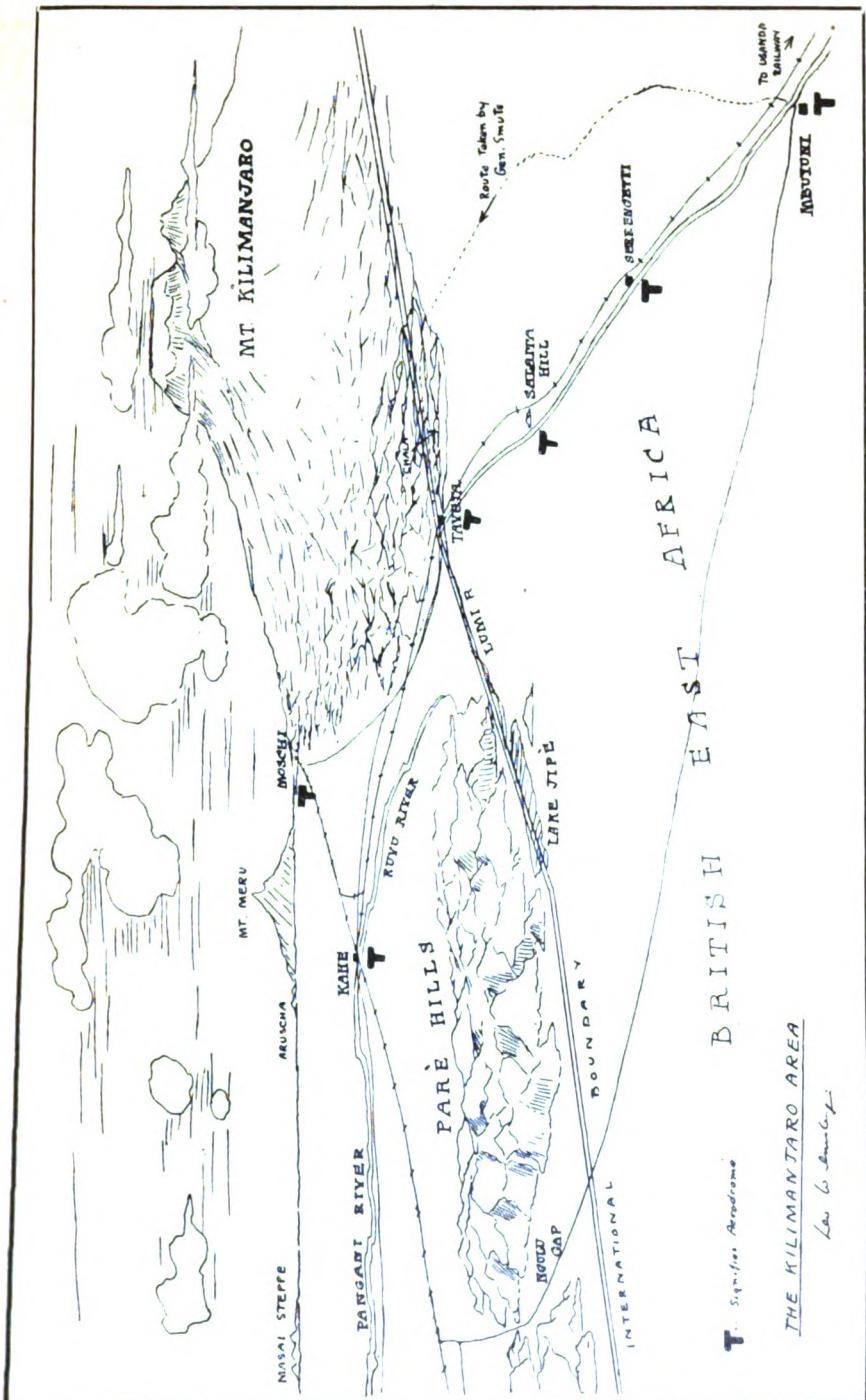
Possibly the best way of explaining their origin is to imagine the air as so much boiling water, with the earth acting as a giant stove, deriving its refracted heat from the sun. The

10 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

air near the ground is heated strongly, becomes lighter, and rises as a more or less powerful current, while a similar current of cold air falls to take its place. An aeroplane flying into the first-named current is naturally lifted, while the downward current produces a dropping effect, or a so-called "pocket."

In addition to this there is the action of the ordinary wind, which sometimes transforms the upward currents into terrific eddies or whirlwinds, which suck up dust, sand, leaves, and branches to a great height, later on we had several experiences with these whirlwinds, or "dust devils" as they are called.

Perhaps the greatest nuisance with which we had to contend was the insect life. I have already referred to the giant termite-heaps. Before our arrival many had been removed from the aerodrome, but soon these industrious little animals began to reassert themselves and build new heaps. In a single night they would produce a mound large enough to wreck a machine. It was not long before one of our hangars collapsed, the wooden pegs having been completely eaten away by the same animals. A colony of these little Huns attacked the legs



Bird's-eye view of Kilimanjaro area.

Drawn by the Author.

T signifies Aerodrome.

of my camp-bed, but on the morning following the night of this tragic discovery I awoke to find that they had been raided by soldier ants, who had already formed up into a long column, and were marching away, each with two or three termites held in his pincers. I should like to take this opportunity for mentioning their gallant commanding officer in despatches.

The aero-engines seemed to have a fascination for all manner of wee beasts, which would crawl into any available orifice, frequently with disastrous results. This entomological offensive was by no means confined to the ground. In the air one had to keep a constant look-out for clouds of locusts which would have played havoc with the propellers; and swarms of bees were equally dangerous and unpleasant. The pilots' and observers' seats were favourite lurking-places for scorpions, tarantulas, and centipedes; and one always turned the cushion over before sitting down.

In spite of these little unpleasantnesses, the work was very fascinating, and the time never palled. When flying was over, we could always wander out into the bush with a rifle or shotgun, and be certain of, at any rate, seeing some-

12 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

thing of interest. The first thing about the "bush" that struck me was the deliciously sweet but evasive scent that everywhere pervaded the air. It reminded me strongly of meadow-sweet and May-blossom, and it would invariably conjure up disturbing memories of English lanes in summer-time, peace-time picnics, and tennis parties. I never traced its origin. If one walked through the occasional clumps of grass, bright-green grasshoppers would leap into the air like a shoal of flying-fish, and wing their way to the next patch of verdant cover. Scores of pretty lizards scuttled about in every direction. Snakes were not particularly abundant, but there was no shortage of tarantulas, centipedes, and scorpions, although even these required a certain amount of hunting, in the daytime at any rate. At night you were hunted.

Many of the largest bushes were decked, Christmas-tree fashion, with the curious purse-like nests of a species of weaver-bird, wonderfully designed to resist the special dangers of the country. The baobabs, too, usually possessed a colony or two of chattering green and blue parrots, whose screeching was deafening.

Game was abundant everywhere, and although, for military reasons, the use of high-powered arms was forbidden, we could get all the sport we wished with a .22 rifle and a small-bored shot-gun. The long grass bordering the aerodrome teemed with quail; and spare-fowl, guinea-fowl, sand-grouse, greater and lesser bustard, haunted the adjacent bush. Within three miles of camp it was quite a common occurrence to see herds of gazelles, impala, geronuk, harte-beeste, eland, oryx, lesser kudu, zebra, giraffe; and also ostrich, wart-hog, jackal, and, with luck, leopard, rhino, cheetah, and even lion. To the Serengetti Plain was only two hours' walk, and this is one of the most famous lion districts in East Africa.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIG PUSH STARTS.

SOON after the arrival of General Smuts the Big Push started. The enemy was manœuvred out of Salaita and Taveta, and after some very severe fighting our troops reached the Tang-Moschi Railway, which, in an incredibly short space of time, was linked up with our own. In the middle of these operations I suddenly developed a bad attack of dysentery, and was sent back by ambulance train to Voi and thence to Nairobi. For nearly a month I hovered near the border-line, but, the climax once passed, the wonderful highland air quickly pulled me round. After a delightful week's holiday at the farm of Mr and Mrs Way, who treated me with that kindness and generosity which is typical of the East African settler, I returned to Mbuyuni, where I awaited orders to proceed to the new

aerodrome at Kahe on the Tanga Railway. They came the evening of my arrival, and I prepared to leave on the following morning. The train was more or less up to time—*i.e.*, only two hours late. Passenger coaches were unknown in those days, and as all the covered-in trucks were full, I had to climb up on to the roof of one of them. Peter, a native servant whom I had procured at Nairobi, fixed up my valise and pillows to make a comfortable seat, and but for the constant shower of red-hot cinders from the engine, it would have been a pleasant journey. We arrived at Taveta late in the afternoon, and were told that the Kahe train would be leaving in half an hour. It left at eleven next morning. The first six miles or so from Taveta is a steep climb, but soon after we had passed the famous Latema Ridge, where so many of our brave fellows were killed, level country was reached, and our driver was able to get up speed. We were travelling now along the slopes of Kilimanjaro, which for the greater part consisted of open grass-land, dotted here and there with dhum palms and baobabs. The line itself was still in a very bumpy condition, although every few miles we passed gangs of natives working at the various cuttings and embankments. We tore

16 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

over one of the latter, doing well over forty miles an hour, and as we did so the whole line slipped sideways at least a foot. Goodness only knows why we didn't leave the track. At the next halt we rushed up to interview the Indian driver, and found him not in the least perturbed.

We arrived at Kahe late in the evening. What a change from Mbuyuni! The air was close and heavy with the almost overpowering smell of swamp. The trees were tall and the vegetation dense and green. Our aerodrome was situated within a few yards of the Pangani river, on ground which only a few weeks before had been swamp itself. It was still nearly all covered with rank grass, only a small portion having been cut to enable our machines to get to work as quickly as possible. Before the war the Germans had regarded Kahe as one of their most unhealthy stations, so we took every precaution so far as mosquito nets and quinine were concerned.

We became very busy indeed. The Huns had just been pushed out of a strong position at Samé on the railway, and were retiring rapidly towards Mombo, whence a light railway had been built nearly half-way towards the central line.

They were ripping up the line and destroying

the bridges as they retired. Every day as we flew along we could see them at work, and several times we saw the actual explosion when they dynamited a water-tank or some other erection likely to be of use to us when we came into occupation. Some time later I met the German officer who had charge of the demolition party. He told me that as soon as an aeroplane was sighted the men immediately left their work and scattered in the bush. This manœuvre would have been successful if our shooting had been good. Instead of hitting the train, however, our bombs sometimes fell wide of the mark, thus often, quite unintentionally, doing some very effective damage. He told me also that one of our bombs had actually hit the engine of a train, blowing it to atoms, and killing the driver and several military passengers.

The scenery on these flights was very fine, particularly in the evening, when, our objective attained and reconnoitred, the machine would be turned for home.

The railway ran close to the foot of the Usambara Mountains, whose precipitous granite cliffs, glowing red in the sun's lowering rays, towered well overhead in spite of our great altitude. To

18 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

the west stretched a level plain of open bush through which the Pangani river meandered like a mighty silver serpent making its weary way to the sea.

Although now nearly fifty miles away, Kilimanjaro still managed comfortably to block out one-third of the northern sky, and one's eyes were drawn towards it as by some magnetic influence.

The river Pangani proved to be an unending source of interest. Its banks were fringed with tall sycamore and mahogany trees, half hidden in a tangle of twisting creepers, in which played and chattered scores of pretty blackfaced, long-tailed monkeys. Here and there a gap in the foliage revealed the river itself, still turbulent and muddy from the rains. Gaily painted dragonflies hovered over its surface. Above the incessant hum of countless insects could be heard the sweet twittering of the weaver-birds, whose long purse-like nests hung down from the trees near to the water. Brilliantly-plumed kingfishers darted here and there, or perched on the slender, gracefully-bending papyrus stems.

Now and again a great crocodile would float lazily past, its eyes and nose just visible above

the surface. A large fish would break water just in front of it; then would come a mighty swish and a splash, and lower down-stream the crocodile would suddenly appear again, just as though nothing had happened.

The Huns were too near to permit of shooting expeditions, so our sporting activities were directed to the more classical and far less energetic pastime of fishing. Unfortunately we had no hooks. We did not belong to the R.F.C. for nothing, however, and in his spare time one of our mechanics made some excellent substitutes from the piano wire used on the aeroplanes. Peter, who had fished in Uganda, and pretended to know all about it, made a good strong line from papyrus fibre, and with a long bamboo rod I soon had quite a respectable outfit.

Bait promised at first to be a problem. The South Africans suggested grasshoppers, but after a long and protracted hunt in the broiling sun, the net bag at the end of an hour standing at two and a half, I found that this was quite a sport in itself. Finally, I decided to test the respective luring capacities of raw meat and bacon fat. But there was no need for any test. I believe those beastly fish would have eaten their

20 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

own tails had we been able to fix them on our hooks without their heads noticing it.

They were cat-fish—fat slimy brutes, with eel-like bodies and cavernous mouths full of cruel fangs, and fringed with whisker-like tentacles, which gave to the whole head a wonderful resemblance to our familiar pussy. They proved to be excellent eating, and made a welcome addition to our very limited menu.

But sport was not always so good. One day we had fished diligently for an hour without getting so much as a nibble. We had chosen a nice cool position under the shade of a spreading sycamore. Peter, who had rigged up a weird contraption of string and rusty nails tied to the end of a pole at least six inches thick, had given it up in disgust, and was now indulging in his favourite occupation.

The scene was wonderfully restful; the sweet singing of the birds mingling with the lapping of the river, and Peter's gentle nasal music giving one a beautiful sensation of calm and peace.

Fixing a huge piece of bacon on to my hook I threw it into the water, and laying my rod on the bank, I commenced to fill my pipe contentedly. I was just lighting a match when there came a

sharp whirr, and the whole outfit was whipped into the stream like a flash.

With a forceful kick I awakened Peter from his dreams of illimitable food and fat wives. He rubbed his eyes and gazed in the direction of my late lamented rod, the end of which could still be seen racing up-stream like the periscope of a submarine. Then he went off into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. I had never even seen him so much as smile before, but now he howled and screamed with delight until the tears ran down his cheeks and he grew short of breath. I have never yet been able to fathom the bottom of an East African's sense of humour, and I was certainly not in the mood for trying it then. I brought him to an appreciation of the fact that he was my servant by ordering him to jump in and swim to the rescue. A nasty-looking crocodile was eyeing us in a very businesslike manner from the opposite bank. Peter did not seem at all enthusiastic. But suddenly the course of the rod changed. It commenced to move swiftly towards us. I seized Peter's line. Discarding the pole and throwing the line out, after several attempts I managed to grapple my own. Immediately the pull of a very big fish became

22 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

evident, and soon after a sharp struggle among the roots of a sunken tree I managed to land him—a fine cat-fish weighing nearly 14 lb.

All this time our infantry was pushing steadily on after the Hun down the east bank of the river. He persistently refused to give battle, and it soon became evident that his plan was to unite with the Wilhelmsthal and Tanga force, and then make for Morogoro, which had been made the political capital of G.E.A. since our warships had bombarded Daresalam. As the Hun retired our flights naturally became longer and longer, and it was at last decided to move farther down the river.

Early one morning our advance convoy, consisting of light tenders, set off for a new aerodrome which had been prepared at the site of an old Masai village near to the river and about fifty miles south of Kahe. There was no real road, only a native path or safari track, the surface of which had not been improved by the constant stream of heavy motor-lorries carrying food and ammunition to the division ahead. The dust was terrible, and so fine that it penetrated our clothing, and formed a nasty muddy deposit on our perspiring bodies. Except in the immediate

proximity of the river the country was very similar to that of Mbuyuni. The traffic had frightened the game, however, and the only living things to be seen were the vultures, and occasionally a pack of jackals squabbling over the remains of a dead mule or ox. The latter now became a very common sight, an eloquent testimony to the insidious ravages of the tsetse-fly, which inhabits practically the whole of the low-lying districts of G.E.A.

We arrived late in the afternoon, and the machines landed just before dusk. During the next two or three days reconnaissances and bombing raids were carried out from sunrise to sunset. Not only had we to maintain a very watchful eye for signs of the retiring enemy, but in addition we had to keep the Commander-in-Chief informed daily as to the exact extent of our own advance. Unfortunately, on account of the aeroplanes, the Hun had taken to marching only by night—and it was rarely that we saw anything of real interest with the exception of his trenches and bridges. On the evening of the third day we received orders to move off once more, and on the following morning the personnel of the Squadron left by road.

24 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

My orders were to stay behind until the afternoon, when I was to go out on a long reconnaissance with Emmett, and land on our return at the new aerodrome, the position of which was indicated on the map.

We successfully reached our objective, but when we came to look for the aerodrome on our return not a sign of it could be seen. There was certainly a fine stretch of open country; but there are conventional devices for marking the actual landing-ground, and of these there was not the slightest sign. We came down to 200 feet in order to examine the ground more closely. I shall not forget that experience. The sun had been particularly hot all day, and numerous whirlwinds travelled over the plain—many of which were powerful enough to suck up to a height of several hundred feet small bushes and broken branches of trees, dust, and heavy sand.

The effect of these dust-devils on an aeroplane can be well imagined, and as it was impossible to avoid them all, we began to have a very rough passage. The machine was tossed about like a feather, and suddenly, in the midst of it all, we were nearly shaken out of our seats by a fearful knocking in the engine. Emmett im-

mediately switched off, as it became very obvious that one of the main bearings had fused. As luck would have it, we were then over a very bushy part, the only possible landing-place being a narrow patch of grass about one hundred yards long and fifty wide. Emmett judged it to an inch, and we came to rest without even scratching off a bit of varnish. The road was quite near, and in about an hour's time we heard the welcome sound of a car. It proved to be the last of our own convoy, and, fortunately enough, was laden with mess stores and our native cook. Leaving a selection of the stores with my pilot, who had to stand by his machine, I got into the car and we set off. We soon reached the open patch, where, we had been told, the new aerodrome would be. Here we found the A.D.C. and the Old 'Un sitting disconsolately in the shade of their machines waiting for something to happen. They were both very hungry and fed up at the same time, and a further disbursement of stores took place before I continued my journey. Hardly had we left them when, suddenly turning a corner in the road, we came across a number of ostriches enjoying a dust-bath.

26 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

We stopped immediately, and I began to fumble for my camera. The cook, however, implored me not to risk so good an opportunity for securing fresh meat, which, he said, was far better than any buck. The sight of the fine tail-feathers more than answered any argument I might bring against this statement, and so, borrowing the driver's .303, I shot the nearest cock. It took us nearly twenty minutes to chop off the two legs, the breast, the wings, and the tail. A leg was far more than the cook could lift unassisted.

We found the Squadron ten miles farther on, and soon a breakdown gang was despatched to Emmett, who turned up quite safely two days later.

The ostrich proved to be all that the cook had claimed for it, and in taste bore a very close resemblance to beef.

CHAPTER III.

MALARIA.

OUR new aerodrome was called Old Lassita, for no other reason than that this happened to be the only name on the map within a radius of twenty miles.

It created quite a record so far as mosquitoes went. As the Mess Sergeant aptly put it, "They fairly rolled you out of bed." Their activities were not confined to the watches of the night either, and although this particular species was exonerated by the doctors of all blame for malaria, its bite proved to be extremely painful.

The Squadron was already beginning to pay heavily for its sojourn at Kahe. Man after man sickened and went down with malaria. We had no doctor with us; but

28 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Pawson,¹ who had some knowledge of medicine, took charge of the invalids and worked like a Trojan in their interest. Medicines were scarce, and of comforts there were none. For aspirin — an essential remedy in the treatment of malaria—we had to depend on private stocks, which were soon exhausted, and a man with a temperature of 105 degrees had to go without this merciful drug and suffer untold agonies.

It speaks well for Pawson's treatment and care that not a single case developed into black-water, the *bête noire* of the East African traveller.

On account of the mosquitoes we were not at all sorry to leave Old Lassita. The next camp was known officially as Kwa Lokua, but we soon changed that to "Daniel's Den." The district simply swarmed with lions, and it was impossible to sleep on account of the terrifying roar they made every night. Dear Old Batten, our adjutant, and K—, one of the equipment officers, had stayed behind at Old Lassita, and

¹ Dear old Pawson died only a few months ago of disease contracted in East Africa. As a gallant officer, gentleman, and, above all, as jolly good pal, his memory will be ever fresh in the hearts of all those who knew him.—L. W.

on the second day they arrived with an exciting story to tell. They had rigged up their beds the previous night with a space of about 10 ft. between them, had turned in early, and, tucked away inside their nets, were soon asleep.

Somewhere about midnight they were awakened by the familiar "cough, cough," and before they could rub the sleep from their eyes a huge lion walked serenely past between them. He made straight for the place where the men slept. Most of them were inside their cars, and to one of these old Leo went, and placing his great paws on the step peered in.

The mechanic asleep inside must have been an old soldier, for with a sigh of disappointment that nearly lifted the car from the ground, His Majesty walked on. The boys piled wood on their fires, and the adjutant and K—, so far recovered as to find their rifles, started to blaze away in the air with the object of frightening the great beast off. They were at last successful, but they spent the remainder of the night huddling in their blankets before the fire.

It must have been a reaction, for one night some time after this, when every one was fast asleep and things were particularly quiet and

30 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

peaceful, K—— suddenly leapt out of bed with a blood-curdling shriek, and seizing his revolver began to fire away as though all the lions in Africa were after his blood. In subsequent camps we always gave K—— the advantage of any cover there might be.

We spent nearly a week at "Daniel's Den," during which time we constantly reconnoitred the country as far south as Mombo, the railway base for the famous Wilhelmsthal agricultural settlement. The Huns had put up a fight at a position which they had prepared at the point where the Pangani almost touches the line. We were the first to discover the existence of this position, and a detailed map of it was handed in to the Staff some days before our infantry attacked. Here also they had built a bridge,¹ which they had time only partially to destroy. They were now making rapidly for Mkalamo and then Handeni, where they hoped to join up with their other force. Everything was in their favour. Owing to the dense bush a flanking movement on our part was a sheer impossibility. The Hun was not dependent upon mechanical transport, but

¹ German bridge.

travelled lightly and swiftly, and, moreover, had the advantage of knowing every inch of the country.

It was a case of jogging on stolidly behind and fighting just when and where our friends the enemy thought fit.

I had an exciting experience flying over Mkalamo. I was up with poor old Bertram, whose tragic death only a few days later cast a black gloom over the whole Squadron. We were flying moderately low, and I was leaning out taking a photograph, when a terrific bump caught our right wing. In a second we were in a nose-dive, spinning as we went earthwards like a leaf falling from a tree. It was a horrible sensation. My belt, of course, was unfastened, and while I hung on like grim death to the struts, my map, notes, and photographic plates went streaming out behind like a paper-chase. Bertram, however, kept his head splendidly. Switching off his engine as soon as the spin commenced, he at last managed to pull her out—not, however, until we were hardly more than 800 feet above the Huns. They must have been disappointed, for later our scouts reported that we had been fired on

32 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

continuously, and they must have concluded that they'd hit the bull when they saw us coming down. I often wonder if they found my notes. I should like very much to have seen their Chief Intelligence Officer trying to puzzle them out. Usually, it was more than I could do myself!

Before leaving Kwa Lokua I had several unsuccessful lion hunts. On one occasion I found the carcase of a hartebeeste still warm, and although we followed the spoor of the lion for nearly six miles, we never got a glimpse of him. The bush was too thick. My only decent bag was a good ram geronuk, a smallish antelope with an extraordinarily long neck and curious crumpled horns. The latter I kept.

On June 11th the Squadron packed up and set off once more. As before, I had to stay behind, do a reconnaissance, and land at the new aerodrome. The reconnaissance had to be abandoned owing to the heavy clouds that hung low over the German positions. However, we landed safely at the new camp, and making ourselves comfortable, awaited the arrival of the convoy. It turned up late in the afternoon — every one hot, thirsty, bad-tempered, and

thick with the red dust of the road. There's nothing like an aeroplane for this country.

The aerodrome was a narrow strip of plain bordering on the west bank of the river. Here and there grew solitary dhum palms, and as there was a reference to these trees on the map the camp was promptly labelled Palms. Once out of the actual basin of the river, the bush became particularly dense, and the ground covered with fiendish bayonet cactus. Only once did I try to cross a clump of this innocent-looking stuff. I'd as soon tackle Kilimanjaro any day. The plant consists of a thick fleshy and springy stem about two feet high, quite smooth, but ending in a sharp calcified point. As the victim moves he presses forward the stem, which bends like a hazel wand. As another step is taken this is released and flies back, usually inflicting a nasty wound in his calf. For this reason, therefore, there was very little shooting at Palms. The river was too turbulent for fishing, and the time began to hang very heavily. Quite close to the camp was a small Masai village. The headman used to come and see us every day, and expressed great marvel at our machines. He was vastly

34 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

astonished when I told him that the cost of an aeroplane was at least £2000. Working it out in cattle and wives, the niggers' Alpha and Omega, we calculated that out of that sum he could settle down with 500 of Alpha and 1500 of Omega. Cattle, he said, were slightly more expensive these days.

The Masai are anything but the savage war-like tribe the missionary at home used to picture them. I never heard of one being enlisted in the King's African Rifles, and the A.D.C. described them as a filthy, covetous, and untrustworthy race well on the way to degeneracy.

The nicest natives I had met so far were the Kavirondo, who hail from Uganda. Because of their immense strength thousands of them were employed as porters. In their native state they wear no clothing at all, and for once the missionary has worked hand in hand with the lay trader in trying to inculcate a less Edenic fashion.

As units of H.M. highly respectable Army they were issued with shorts and drill shirts. These, however, were far too good to waste on this dull deserted country, and one of the most ludicrous sights to be seen was a long line of Kavirondos

waiting for their loads, all of them stark naked, and each with his glad rags wrapped up into a neat bundle balanced on his woolly head.

But it is a mistake to imagine that the nigger is happier without clothing. Like a cat he loathes cold and wetness, and next to his tummy his one passion in life is to collect any kind of fabric. He is a pretty shrewd judge of quality too, and the idea that he'll choose a shoddy blanket on account of its brilliant hues is a fallacious one. In spite of his love of colour, his passion for show is always tempered with solid common-sense.

In a few days our people occupied Mkalamo, after a fierce scrap in the bush in which they never caught as much as a glimpse of the enemy. This was ideal country from the point of view of the retiring force. The Germans could prepare a position astride the road they knew our infantry must take, conceal their rifle-pits and machine-gun emplacements under bushes and amongst the grass, and taking us by surprise, pour a deadly fire into our midst and retire before we had time to recover from our natural confusion. This was the type of fighting that obtained throughout the campaign,

36 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

and one in which the Hun obviously held the advantage.

This time he had escaped with a few casualties, and we were soon in hot pursuit down the trolley line that led from Mkalamo to Handeni.

I was sent to Mkalamo to report on a possible aerodrome. The only likely place was a lawn-like patch on the Pangani, and only twenty miles from Palms. This, however, would mean a considerable saving on our reconnaissances, and so I was ordered to prepare it with the forty boys placed at my disposal and in charge of Sergeant Adams. It was quite good fun being on one's own. I made a cosy little bivouac by cutting a hole into a very dense mass of bush. Peter proved to be quite a passable cook, and he produced fresh milk, eggs, chickens, and fish from a neighbouring village.

I visited this place one morning. To reach it one had to cross the river on a crazy footbridge made of rafia palms. The end section was movable, and this the villagers took up every night, as they had no faith in the wandering Masai who frequented the other bank.

It was a fishing village, but as all their apparatus was some distance away I had no

opportunity for studying their methods. However, I saw a wicker trap very similar to that used by the English fishermen for catching crabs and lobsters. There was nothing particularly ingenious about it, and as the fish are so abundant and so easily caught, perhaps there is no occasion for them to tax their limited brains or abilities unduly.

Guinea-fowls were quite common near the camp, and one evening a flock of about one hundred alighted on the very bush in which my "bivvy" was made. It was fine sport shooting them with rifles, and we got enough to send back to Palms with a passing car.

One morning all the boys were busy cutting long grass on the aerodrome. Taking the rifle, I strolled down towards the river. Suddenly a large reed-buck got up at my feet. I fired, but missed badly, and away the animal went straight towards where the boys were working. A buck cannot run in long grass—it bounds, very much like a kangaroo. I daren't risk another shot because of the boys, but I shouted, wishing them to turn it back and give me another chance. They, however, mistook my shout for a cry of warning, and seeing something big

38 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

and brownish leaping towards them, several of them screamed "Simba! Simba!" (Lion! Lion!), and throwing down their tools, the whole gang bolted for their lives. They were horribly shame-faced when they found out what it was, yet they appreciated the joke immensely. A nigger possesses a very keen sense of humour.

At last the aerodrome was finished, and I got orders to return to Palms. On the way there I managed to bag a pair of young geronuk, both without horns. The second one I shot with my revolver, as I had used up all my ammunition shooting guinea-fowl.

On my arrival I found that my aerodrome¹ was not to be used, as one had been found near Handeni. We set off about four the next afternoon. It was quite dark by the time we reached Mkalamo, but as our orders were to reach the camp that night, we lit our lamps and pushed on. The road was simply vile—a mere clearing through the bush. It was horribly cold too, and at Luchumu, a large native village on the river, we stopped and made coffee. This was the last we were to see of the dear old Pangani. Most of us had grown quite fond of

¹ Known unofficially as Walmsley's Folly.

its brown muddy waters and picturesque banks,
Like the sea, there is something almost human
about a river, and I, at any rate, felt that I
was losing a friend.

It was nearly midnight when we arrived,
and without troubling to prepare any food,
we spread our valises on the ground and were
soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

MBAGUI AND BACK TO MOMBASA.

MBAGUI, as our new camp was called, proved to be quite different from anything we had yet struck in East Africa. The aerodrome was a miniature plain, the whole of which had at one time been under cultivation—a fact we were soon to discover to our sorrow, for the old furrows made the immediate arrival of the machines an utter impossibility. It was a stupendous job levelling the ground, for there had been no rain for months, and the soil was baked stone hard. Help, however, was forthcoming from the local village, whose inhabitants were only too glad to have an opportunity of doing something “anti-Hun.” The latter had taken or destroyed all their cattle and live stock, and had wantonly razed every blade of corn and maize to the ground, and in payment had palmed off on to them several pounds’ worth of “dud” coinage.

Except for the plain, the whole country, so far as eye could see, was clad in stunted forest. There was no thorn except for an occasional "ebony" bush, neither were there any palms or baobabs. It reminded one more of a young English oak forest. There was certainly nothing tropical about it.

Water promised to be our chief problem. The village depended for its supply upon a hole dug in the dried-up bed of a tributary of the Pangani. The passage of several thousand troops during the last week had not tended towards improving either the quantity or quality of this supply. There was nothing left now but a filthy evil-smelling syrup, which, even with tea or strong coffee, made one ill. The only possible way of getting it down was to hold one's nose, as our parents did in the days of Gregory powders and castor-oil.

We tried digging fresh holes, but with little success, and it was not until our worthy sergeant-major, an old South African engineer, set to work that life became possible once more. Some say that, having been a staunch blue-ribbon advocate all his life, he had acquired a sixth sense for the divine fluid; anyway, it was entirely due to his individual effort that an unending supply of cool

42 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

clean water was ensured for the Squadron during its lengthy stay at this place.

It was nearly a week before the machines arrived, and the ground even then was so rough that several of them were slightly damaged in landing. We started work immediately they were repaired.

There had been some very fierce fighting of late, and the Hun was busy preparing a very strong position at Ruhungu, a mountain spur butting on to the Morogoro road, about forty-five miles from Mbagui. He had been strongly reinforced from Tanga and Wilhelmsthal (which were now ours), and also from Morogoro, and rumour had it that this was to be his last stand. Smuts, who was sitting down in front of the Hun, had sent his mounted troops off on a cleverly-planned flanking movement through the Nguru Mountains on the enemy's left.

One of the dreariest phases of the whole campaign followed. The country to be traversed by the mounted troops was extraordinarily difficult. There was no definite road, the bush was extraordinarily dense, the paths in some places so steep that it became little short of mountaineering. It was impossible to send up continuous supplies, and

as the country had already been depleted of food by the Huns, our men were practically starving. All this time our main force was being shelled daily by the enemy's long-range guns, which had been removed from the *Königsberg*. Our reconnaissances, too, became anything but pleasant. It took us quite an hour to reach the German lines, and on the way there was not a single open patch large enough for a tennis-court, let alone an aerodrome. And even after making this dreary trip, it frequently happened that the whole of the enemy's country was clothed in dense low clouds, rendering observation impossible.

We had to reconnoitre not only the German position at Ruhungu, but also the country for many miles behind. The motor road as far as Turiani had to be watched for signs of traffic, although the most that I ever saw was a group of three white Germans mounted on bicycles, who fled into the jungle at our approach. Even the scenery palled at times, and then I used to while away the time writing letters or reading novels. In this way I read through the whole of Rider Haggard's 'Ayesha'; and it was interesting to look over the side and see dismal swamps, mysterious rivers, purple hills, similar in every

44 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

respect to those around which this romantic story is woven.

The villagers at Mbagui were quite interesting. They were Swahili, with a dash of Masai in their blood ; but they possessed few of the unpleasant characteristics of the latter, and they worked splendidly on the aerodrome.

When this was completed they gave us an *n'goma* or dance. It was a weird affair, and quite clever in its way. Only the men participated, and their grotesque movements were supposed to be a representation of the ostrich. To give a touch of reality to the effect, tufts of feathers were fastened to their heads, shoulders, and hips ; and although their interpretation was not exactly Pavlovic, it was extraordinarily good, and I never saw an *n'goma* to compare with it anywhere else in Africa.

We had been at Mbagui a fortnight when I got my first attack of malaria, and I was sent back to Mbuyuni. By the time I arrived there the fever had abated, and after a couple of days in hospital I was sent down to Mombasa for a week's seaside treatment. Mombasa proved to be a delightful old town, and I never tired of exploring its picturesque old streets and bazaars.

It is typically Eastern, yet quite free from the unpleasant odours and crowds of pestering children so characteristic of the Egyptian towns. I made several trips to the coral reefs to the north of the harbour. Here there were some perfectly fascinating sea-gardens, crowded with all manner of strange beasts. Great sea-worms twisted amongst the tangle of brightly-coloured weeds; there were sea-urchins which shot out their long needle-like spines at a touch; huge star-fishes — blue, yellow, and red — and their cousins, the fragile brittle-stars, which think less of losing a limb than a man would of sneezing; there were gorgeous sea-anemones and exquisitely moulded corals, gaudily-painted fish, dainty crustaceans, sea-slugs, sea-cucumbers, sponges, and all manner of shell-fish, the beauty and form of which defy description.

I tried to get a trip in one of the tiny fishing craft that are sailed out so skilfully into the teeth of the great monsoon rollers, and then into the quiet waters sheltered by the barrier reef. The fishermen wouldn't risk it, however, and I had to content myself with Mombasa harbour, which, I firmly believe, didn't contain a single fish. When at the end of two hours

46 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

I vented this theory to the Swahili boatman, he merely grinned and remarked, "Shauri ya munguu" (It is the affair of Allah),—which I thought very cool, after he'd sworn that we'd catch a bucketful in an hour. His optimism faded somewhat when I told him that the matter of payment was also to be "an affair of Allah."

Peter, who during the last few weeks had shown signs of a very common complaint among our boys—home-sickness—fell really ill, and I had to pack him off to hospital. This was somewhat of a nuisance; but just as the train was steaming off, an extremely ferocious-looking youth with filed teeth came up and offered his services. The teeth did it—and that was how I came to hire the priceless Maganga, who stuck to me throughout the campaign and proved to be a most faithful slave.



Maganga, the Author's servant.



The Old Bee, taken just before we set out on our record flight from Fort Johnston.

CHAPTER V.

BACK TO THE FRONT.

I ARRIVED at Mbagui a week or so later, and was soon at work again on the same old reconnaissance. There had been little change in the situation during my absence. The Ruhungu fortifications had been elaborated to some extent, and the line now extended from the mountains to a large swamp through which our troops could not possibly pass. The shelling by the *Königsberg* gun still continued at intervals, but it was never fired when we were near. At Turiani, a very ancient field-gun had been mounted as an "Archy," and it was very amusing to fly over and watch the German gunners trying to keep their sights on us as we dived and spiralled. We had a very wholesome respect for their machine-guns, however, of which there seemed to be no scarcity.

48 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

So far I had been very lucky in regard to forced landings, the engine usually failing within gliding distance of the aerodrome or open country. On one occasion, however, something went wrong when we were nearly twenty miles away on the outward journey. The pilot turned immediately, but we had already lost a thousand feet. There was not a square yard of open country nearer than Mbagui, and although the engine kept picking up for a minute or so, it soon became apparent that we were in for a crash. For twenty minutes we struggled on, and then at last the beastly thing "konked" altogether. Immediately we became keenly interested in the botany of the country beneath. The pilot did the only possible thing—skimmed the tops of the trees until the machine commenced to lose flying speed, then turned her nose up so that she pancaked. The observer is privileged to close his eyes when the final crash comes, and so curling up my legs I waited without enthusiasm for the fireworks. There was a most fearful sound of cracking timber and tearing fabric, and then a wonderful sense of stillness. It was all over, and barring a few odd thorns in all sorts of indescribable regions of our anatomy from the

trees we had pruned, neither of us was a bit the worse. Hardly a square yard of the aeroplane was left intact.

We had landed in an inhabited part, and in a few minutes were surrounded by hundreds of awe-stricken natives. With an ever-ready eye for business, they were soon collecting the odd bits of fabric which decorated the forest for a considerable distance around. We were not such asses as to allow that, however; and so, reclaiming everything, we established a market, and were soon doing a brisk trade in chickens, eggs, and milk. To the headman we gave the gaudy identification mark used on all British aeroplanes, which with great pride he promptly used to adorn his person. Taking a native as a guide, I walked back to the camp, a distance of about eight miles, and soon a party was sent out to save any serviceable parts left of the machine.

Two days after news came in that the Huns had evacuated their position at Ruhungu, and, safely dodging the mounted troops who had by this time got well in behind them, were now making a hasty retreat to Morogoro. Our whole force was hot on their track. A possible aero-

50 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

drome being reported some miles beyond Ruhungu, I was ordered to take up a small convoy and relieve our forward officer. I set off with three cars and twenty or thirty boys. It took nearly an hour to reach Handeni. This is one of the military posts which the Hun had established throughout the colony during his wars with the natives. They consist usually of a strongly - barricaded stone - built fort, or Boma, and accommodation for a company or so of native troops and their white officers.

Leaving Handeni, we drove along what had once been a very fine motor road, but which was already badly cut up by our heavy transport. For the first few miles we passed through dense bush, but this, farther on, gave way to magnificent forest, which continued for nearly forty miles. Some of the trees were an enormous height, and were it not for the costly problem of transport, the value of the timber alone would run into millions. The scenery was very fine. There was a remarkable scarcity of animal life, however. There were no birds, and the dead silence of the forest was uncanny. Perhaps the entire absence of game might be explained by the myriads of tsetse-fly (*G. morsitans*), which

viciously attacked all our animals. Humans were by no means immune, and whenever we halted they descended on us immediately. Their sharp proboscis will penetrate even a drill-jacket and shirt, and the stab they give is very painful.

I did not hear of any cases of sleeping-sickness in the district, although this species is now supposed to be equally to blame with its cousin, *G. palpalis*, for the carrying of the deadly trypanosoames.

In the evening we reached the Lukigura river. It appeared to be little more than a collection of dirty greenish pools, seething with tadpoles and minute animal life. There were at least fifty dead oxen and mules lying rotting in the river-bed, and the prospect of spending the night in such salubrious surroundings filled me with horror. It was too dark to push on, for the road was very dangerous, so we had to make the best of it.

No one felt in the least like breakfast next morning, and we set off before the sun had risen. There is something particularly exhilarating in the sharp, almost frosty early morning air in East Africa. Usually it gave me a

52 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

violent attack of home-sickness, and the first half-hour or so on the road I would pass in a sort of day-dream. The trees and grass sparkle with dew, which is sufficiently heavy to lay the dust that later becomes so unpleasant.

Leaving the so-called river, we struck out towards the foot of the Ngoro Mountains. Soon we reached the famous Shell Camp, where the big German guns had given our force a most annoying two months, and we were not long in sighting the elaborate field-works of the Ruhungu position. Here we stopped for some coffee and a light breakfast. It was very interesting to examine the trenches and investigate various structures which had puzzled us greatly from the air. There was not time to walk round the whole system, however, and soon we were on the road once more. About half an hour's run from Ruhungu we turned off from the main road and struck out in an easterly direction. The going became perfectly appalling. The track was very narrow, half-grown over with rank elephant-grass, and overhung with bush and creepers. There were no bridges over the numerous watercourses, and in places we had to cut down branches and grass to spread on the soft

sand to prevent our cars from sinking axle-deep. By the time we sighted the aerodrome—Kom-sanga—it was nearly dark. It appeared that we were quite near to the Wami river, across which we were building a bridge to enable part of the main body to carry out a flanking movement on the enemy's right. A company of the latter was sitting watching us only six miles away.

CHAPTER VI.

NEARING THE CENTRAL RAILWAY.

THE aerodrome promised to be a particularly tough job, as the surface was cracked very much like a mud flat exposed to the fierce rays of the summer sun. Every inch had to be hoed, and the next day the whole force, soldiers, porters, and all, set to work on it. By afternoon, however, the bridge was finished and the column moved off, leaving us to complete the work as best we could with the labour at our command. Only a very small force was left to guard the bridge, and as it was impossible for us to move our transport inside the narrow circle of trench, we were ordered to be ready to protect ourselves in case the company of Huns decided to attack. We turned in that night very tired with our day's work, and, I'll say it quite honestly, without a

thought for the morrow. Just an hour before dawn we were awakened by a terrific rattle of musketry. Leaping out of our beds and seizing our rifles we lay down in the rank dew-drenched grass, in order to get out of the way of the bullets which were whistling in a most embarrassing manner immediately around us. I admit I was horribly frightened; if the Huns were attacking in force (it certainly sounded like it) we hadn't a hope, for only half a dozen of us had rifles and we didn't possess a single bayonet. Not that I particularly hankered after one just at that moment. I was clad in a very flimsy suit of tussore silk pyjamas, and the cold dew (ahem) was sending cold shivers up my spine. Of course one felt bold enough for anything, but you can hardly expect a man to dash into battle with no more armour than a diaphanous silk sleeping suit. In those early days of the war I had often pictured myself leading a company into action—"Come on, lads! give 'em hell!" and all that sort of thing; now that it had arrived in reality I decided that fighting is not such a poetical affair as one might imagine. Suddenly I caught sight of something moving stealthily through

56 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

the grass just ahead. Ye gods! the first of them! I lifted my rifle and drew a shaky bead on the object, and was just debating with myself whether I should fire or not when the object spoke.

“Don’t shoot, lads, it’s me!”

It was our Flight Commander who had been doing a little bit of reconnoitring on his own. He thanked me for not firing.

The rifle fire still went on, but soon the very welcome rat-tat-tat-tat of a Maxim echoed across the veldt. It was the bridge guard replying, and almost immediately the noise of the musketry died away. The Huns had withdrawn, in my own humble opinion a most wise and considerate thing to do; another five minutes and I should have died of —er—cold.

As soon as it was light we walked down to the bridge to count the dead and wounded. Not a man, ox, or dog, Hun or otherwise, had been scratched. When we asked the O.C. Guard for details of the great battle, he told us that he’d clean forgotten all about it.

“Ah, yes,” he added as an afterthought, “now you mention it, a small Hun patrol did

fire a few shots just before dawn — we soon scared 'em off, however."

No wonder we've won the war.

After breakfast we started work once more on the aerodrome, but without reinforcements of labour it promised to be a hopeless proposition. About lunch-time our worthy sergeant-major, who had been left behind at Mbagui, arrived in camp on foot, tired, dusty, and bathed in perspiration. He had a harrowing tale to tell. Last night they had camped at a village on the roadside ten miles away, and they had heard the firing this morning. A few minutes after leaving the car had broken down, and the sergeant-major had decided to walk on to us alone. He had not marched more than a mile before he ran slick into an ambush of Hun (?) askaris.

"They were only 100 yards away. I could see their Mauser rifles, and knew they were Germans by their green woolly hats. But they weren't going to get the sergeant-major; dropping forward suddenly as though shot, I rolled away through the grass, and at last made my way into a little grassy glade, where I was just congratulating myself on a lucky escape, when

58 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

my blood froze to see in front of me three huge lions. Gentlemen, I'll admit that the sergeant-major for once in his life was frightened, but thank Heaven I kept my head. I could hear the askaris chattering away a few yards behind, and deciding I'd rather tackle them than the lions, cocking my rifle I moved stealthily towards them. But the lions beat me, sir; they dashed past and were after them Huns like cats after chickens. I saw no more of either, and here I am, gentlemen—no, I don't mind if I does," as some one offered him a cool-looking lime-juice and soda.

Just then a Gold Coast black soldier arrived with a message from the O.C. Bridge. He was clad in the ordinary khaki uniform, plus the green woolly cap which is the distinguishing feature of this regiment.

"Ever seen one of those green caps before, sergeant-major?" some one asked.

The sergeant-major did not reply.

Late in the afternoon orders came through that we had to abandon the Komsanga aerodrome and rejoin the main column at Turiani without delay. Two companies of Germans were already reported to be moving on to the

bridge. There was no delay. We left within an hour, taking the narrow road that leads through the dismal swamps of the Wami river to the main motor road to Morogoro. Here was the real jungle. On each side the tall papyrus and elephant-grass rose higher than the canvas roofs of our cars. The air was heavy with the smell of dank and rotting vegetation; the incessant croaking of the bull-frogs and the hum of countless mosquitoes made one's ears sing. Darkness had fallen before we got half of our way, and the mosquitoes changed their music to an action song. Myriads of fireflies flitted ghostlike among the grass; the frogs increased their croaking to a deafening roar, and occasionally one heard the weird gurgling of a hippo walking through the mire near the river. On the whole, we were glad to see the twinkling camp fires of Turiani; and when at last we arrived there safe and sound, we were even more pleased to meet the remainder of the Squadron, who somehow or other had managed to wangle quite a fine supply of "lime-juice." There is nothing like lime-juice for this country.

Next morning we were told that an aerodrome had been selected for us at Dakawa, near the

60 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Wami river, and we were to push on as fast as the Divisional transport on the road "would permit." I had never longed for an aeroplane so much as I did that day.

The first mile took us exactly an hour. We had to remain in the wake of a mule waggon and choke in the filthy cloud of dense red dust it shot up skywards, until a clearing in the bush gave one an opportunity for getting ahead. If the "clearing" really was a clearing, one gained a mule-cart length; if by any chance there happened to be a concealed stump or an ant-bear hole, the car would probably stick, and by the time it was free again one had lost half a dozen mule-cart lengths, and so the exasperating business would start all over again. Naturally, it was nearly dark before we reached our destination. There was just light enough to see, however, that at last we had really got a magnificent aerodrome, and one that would necessitate very little labour indeed.

We were awakened next morning by the sound of a continuous cannonade. The Huns were contesting the Wami river crossing, and judging by the large number of wounded coming back the fighting was very intense. The aerodrome was

Nearing the Central Railway. 61

not quite ready to receive the machines, and it was very depressing sitting there listening to the fight and being absolutely impotent. When they did arrive, late in the afternoon, it was too dark to do any good, and as a matter of fact the Hun had actually withdrawn.

Early next morning we set out to find if the enemy was preparing any new positions on the Morogoro road. My pilot was Carey-Thomas, a fiery little Welshman with whom I had made many trips. He had already experienced a few interesting adventures on his own. Missing the aerodrome at Palms on one occasion owing to the bad light, he had landed at "Daniel's Den," and had spent the night in the observer's seat with half a dozen lions prowling around him. The only food he could find in the machine was a tin of bully beef, and possessing no knife or tin-opener, he had to rub a hole through the metal casing with a tiny pebble, and pick out the shreds of beef with his fingers. He hates being reminded of the adventure, so that I gleefully put it on record.

For nearly ten miles we followed the straight narrow red road that leads to Morogoro, without seeing any sign of the Hun or fortifications.

62 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

When we did at last come across him, he was engaged in fording the Ngere-Ngere river, and there was practically no cover under which to hide. It was a most thrilling experience seeing the enemy run about in the open like a flock of scared sheep, but exasperating in the extreme, for we had strict injunctions not to bomb or attack them in any way. Only once again during the campaign did I see such a glorious chance of inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, and that time we didn't carry bombs because all our available lifting capacity was taken up with petrol. I could see that my pilot's fingers were simply itching to pull those innocent-looking little bomb levers, but he contented himself with diving down low and adding slightly to the demoralisation of the people on the ground; they at any rate hardly credited us with such peaceful intentions. The return journey was without incident. We heard later that we had been ordered not to bomb, to encourage the enemy to dally on his journey, giving our flanking column time to get round to his rear.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAILWAY AND BEYOND.

THIS flanking column was making a wide detour to the east of Morogoro, and our orders next day were to report on the exact whereabouts of the head of the column, also as to the nature of the country ahead. The maps with which the Expeditionary Force was supplied were very inaccurate and untrustworthy. By this time, fortunately, my eye was becoming fairly practised in spotting native paths, peculiar clearings in the bush, newly constructed grass huts, and the hundred and one things which are of military importance in this kind of work. I flew chiefly by instinct. To compare objects on the ground with the map as one flies along, as one does at home, would be impossible under these circumstances. A river marked on the map by a thick blue line, on the ground is only a dried-up watercourse,

64 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

taking possibly quite a different direction to that indicated on paper. A village marked here on the map is in reality perhaps another ten miles farther on, or more likely still does not exist at all. Smoke or dust were generally good things to go by, but one often went miles out of one's course chasing a cloud of dust that turned out to be a swarm of locusts. There was little difficulty in spotting fortifications, no matter what care had been expended in camouflaging them with grass ; and in spite of statements that have been made to the contrary, wherever our machines were enabled to reconnoitre the country ahead of our advancing troops, detailed sketches or photographs of all enemy positions were handed in by our Squadron to the Infantry Commanders.

On this occasion there was no mistaking the whereabouts of our column, because of the dense clouds of smoke arising from the numerous bush fires that careless campers had started. We had to fly through a pall of dirty brown smoke, as thick in parts as a London fog, and it was by no means a pleasant experience. The air was filled with wisps of burnt grass, and the atmosphere was distinctly close and acrid to the taste. The ground was almost invisible, and although

here and there we got a glimpse of the road, we saw no sign of our troops until we had passed the burning area. Then we sighted the column, winding like an immense black snake across the veldt. Marking the position of the head of it as accurately as I could on my map, I signalled the course to the pilot, and we pushed on. On an aerial reconnaissance of this description the observer is entirely responsible for the route to be taken, and for the general navigation. Matters relating to the safety and actual control of the aeroplane are left of course to the pilot.

My task now was to describe the nature of the country lying between our infantry and their objective, the Central Railway line and the eastern approaches to Morogoro. For military purposes the vegetation was divided into the following classes ;—

- (a) *Dense bush*—Thorn and cactus; absolutely impenetrable.
- (b) *Open bush*—Thorn, but with open glades; passable for infantry, and sometimes armoured cars and artillery.
- (c) *Thin bush*—Grassland, with occasional thorn; passable for all arms.

66 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

- (d) *Steppe*—Rolling grassland; passable for all arms.
- (e) *Dense forest*—Passable for infantry only in single file; no wheeled transport.
- (f) *Open forest*—Thin stunted trees, similar to open bush, and passable for all arms.
- (g) *Swamp*—Papyrus, and generally elephant-grass; impassable, and invariably infested with tsetse-fly.

It was only by constant practice that one could discriminate between these classes with any degree of accuracy from the air. In addition, careful notes had to be made as to the occurrence of water-holes, game, grazing land for the transport animals, the width and approximate depth of rivers, the size of villages and native plantations, and the quantity of their live stock. Native paths showing indications of an inordinate amount of traffic had to be searched carefully for signs of enemy patrols or porter convoys. One's time, therefore, was usually fully occupied.

Marking on my map as much information of this description as possible, I carefully examined the whole of the district through which our

people were to advance; and then, striking the Central Railway line, we decided to fly down it for a few miles on the off-chance of encountering a German train. We were not to be disappointed. Another ten minutes brought us to a little railway station, standing in which were two long trains, each with steam up. The platforms on either side were littered with stores of all descriptions, and hundreds of native porters scattered helter-skelter into the bush at our approach. Bullock waggons, hand-carts, trolleys, donkeys, and various transport filled the station yard, from which a fine broad road could be seen leading south towards the eastern flank of the Uluguru Mountains.

The Germans were evidently evacuating their stores from Morogoro, and this road was to be the line of their retreat. My pilot lost no time in getting to work. Throttling down the engine, he pushed the joy-stick forward, and we dived at the station at a speed of something like 100 miles an hour. It was a very thrilling sensation. This engine of ours had an awkward habit of refusing to open out again after being throttled down, and I heaved a sigh of relief when, at 800 feet from the ground, we flattened

68 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

out, and it burst forth once more into a comforting roar. We had now an excellent view of the station. Very few human beings were visible, and those that we did see seemed quite excited about something. We circled round and round for a minute or two, and then flying immediately over the trains the pilot released his first bomb. I watched it leave the machine and sail swiftly down towards the ground : then with a greenish flash and puff of black smoke it burst on the embankment side, a yard or two from the centre of one of the trains. The Huns looked now as though they were feeling the strain. The second bomb was an infinitely better shot, but a trifle short, bursting in the centre of the track ten yards behind the guard's van of the second train. The third was obviously a dud, for neither of us saw it; but the fourth and last made a direct hit on a large station building, which evidently was being used as a store. Following the first flash of the explosion, the whole roof seemed to rise slowly up, until its rafters showed like the teeth of a comb, then it sank earthwards in an immense cloud of dust and smoke. Feeling quite pleased with ourselves we turned for home, and making a wide

detour to avoid the smoke pall, we landed safely an hour later.

The following day was Sunday, and Carey-Thomas and I were again ordered out, this time to reconnoitre Morogoro itself; then, if we had time, to follow the railway line to Kilossa, where we had to locate General Van Deventer's Force, which had advanced from Kilimanjaro through Kondoa Irangi and was now closing in on the main column.

The town of Morogoro lies at the foot of the Uluguru Mountains, and we had no difficulty in locating it. It was quite a cheering sight to see brick houses again, and respectably laid out streets and squares. All the larger buildings were decorated with enormous Red Crosses. In the European quarter there was no sign of life whatever, but the native town simply swarmed with moving figures. We had no bombs with us, and if we had there would have been no temptation to use them. For nearly ten minutes we flew round and round, examining the town through field-glasses, counting the rolling stock in the station, looking for fortifications. There was no sign of the latter, however, and evidently the Germans had no intention of defending the

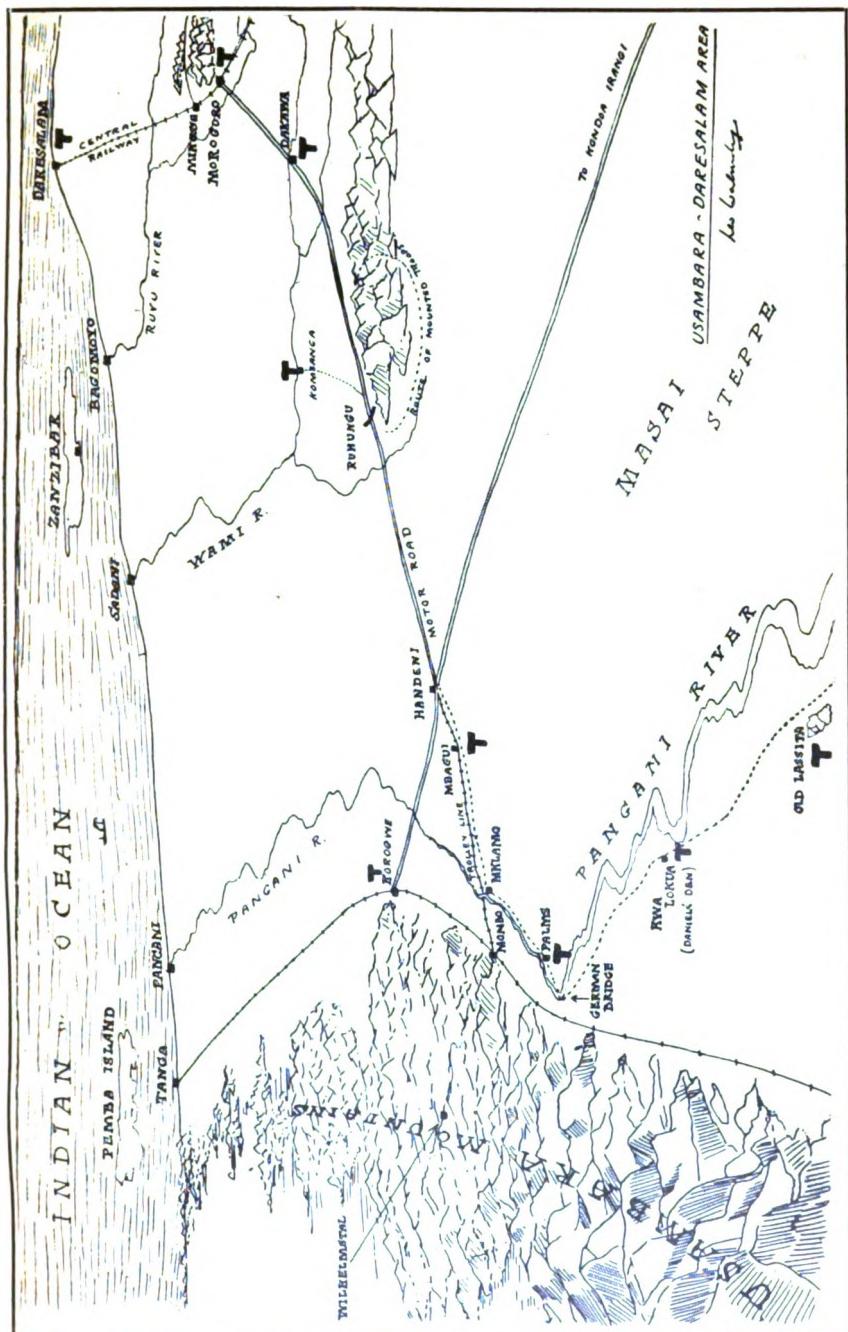
70 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

place. I was busy completing my notes when suddenly there came a terrific explosion just behind the machine. Looking back, I saw a cloud of black smoke in the air, hardly a hundred yards away. It was my first real Archy. Looking down to see if I could possibly spot the gun position, I was startled to see a second shell burst, this time below, but within very respectable distance. A very nasty sensation made itself apparent in the region of my solar plexus, my hair began to stiffen, and cold beads of perspiration trickled down my brow. Looking round at the pilot I found that he was in no way perturbed, and that evidently he had not the slightest intention of increasing the range.

With a very shaky hand I scribbled a message and passed it to him. "Have finished my notes, old thing; don't you think we'd better be making for Kilossa?" By this time shells were bursting in rapid succession around us. In a minute or two the answer came back, written in a beautiful copy-book hand—

"Might as well have another five minutes while we're here. We *must* spot that gun position!"

The five minutes passed like five long years.



Bird's-eye view of Usambara-Daresalam area.

Drawn by the Author.

T signifies Aerodrome.

We found the gun position all right, or at least one of them, in the very centre of the railway turn-table, on which, we discovered later, the Hun had very ingeniously mounted an 88 mm. field-gun. I was not at all sorry to get out of range of it.

Following the railway line after leaving Morogoro was a very easy matter. A few miles west of the town the nature of the country changes completely, the dense bush giving way to a level grassy plain, dotted here and there with baobabs and dhum palms. Most of the railway bridges had been effectively destroyed, and all water-tanks had been blown up. It took us three-quarters of an hour to reach Kilossa, a small settlement situated at the point where the railway line leaves the plain and enters a deep valley of the Mpapua Mountains.

There were no signs of British occupation, and we flew on up the line for nearly six miles, until at last the height of the mountains forbade further progress. We were just about to turn, when suddenly I spotted something unusual on the crest of a hill that we were passing, at a height of about 400 feet. It was a line of some fifty rifle-pits, obviously German, and overlooking the

72 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

road down which our people must pass. Searching carefully with my glasses, I could see distinctly that each pit was occupied. Here was information that would be of great value to our infantry, if only we could let them know. Unfortunately I had no message bag, but scribbling a short note with a sketch of the position, I tied it in my handkerchief and, for want of a better weight, placed a couple of cartridges inside. We found the head of the British column only a mile away, winding down the slopes of a hill, and, flying low, we dropped the handkerchief as near as we could to the road. Whether it was found or not I never knew. Our petrol was now getting low, and striking off across country on a compass - bearing we at last sighted the welcome smoke-fires of our camp, and landed a few minutes later.

Every one was very excited about our experience over Morogoro. As a matter of fact the whole performance had been witnessed from the camp, and next morning I had the opportunity of watching the other people go through it. It was quite thrilling to sit in the comfortable shade of your mess-hut and watch the German shells bursting round the aeroplanes which contained

your own particular pals. There were never any casualties, however, and it was distinctly comforting to hear the deep boom of our bombs bursting in the military camp at the outskirts of the town.

Two or three days later I received orders to go out with Carey-Thomas once more, to reconnoitre the road that we had seen leading from Mikesse on our train-bombing expedition. At the last moment, however, this order was cancelled, and Mac was told to take my place while I went out with Captain Turner to the west of the mountains. Carey and Mac "took off" about 3.30 P.M., and we followed immediately. For nearly eight miles we kept them in view, and then they turned east and disappeared. Our own trip was not a particularly interesting one, merely to locate a small mounted force of ours, twenty miles or so west of Morogoro. We found them without difficulty. Turning for home, the pilot asked me if I would like to call at Morogoro on the way. The last machine that had visited this place had had a very nasty time with the guns, and I cannot say that I felt particularly keen about extending my knowledge of German artillery. My all-pervading sense of

74 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

curiosity won, however, and the machine was pointed towards the town. It was horrible waiting for the first bang, and I had a hard job to keep from closing my eyes. There is more in this ostrich and the bush idea than you would think.

No shot was fired, however, and it soon dawned on us that the Huns had either left or were leaving. The railway station and many adjacent sheds were ablaze, all the bridges except that in the middle of the town were destroyed. We flew round for five minutes or so and then left for home.

We landed about 4.30, and as there was still plenty of light I got permission to walk into the bush with my rifle. Although game spoor was abundant, I saw very little to shoot. A large wart-hog I missed badly, but made up slightly for this by knocking over a lesser bustard or korahn. Better things were waiting for me, however, and just about dusk I sighted a herd of impala, one of which I bagged. Marking the exact location of the carcass, I pushed on after the herd and managed to get another one. Setting off for the camp, I soon realised that in the excitement of the chase I had come farther

than I thought. Darkness was upon me with startling suddenness, and with due philosophy I came to the conclusion that I was lost. There was absolutely nothing to guide me but the glow in the sky where the sun had just sunk. The stars were hidden by clouds. The only thing to do in a case like this is to stop and think things out. There was no tree to climb, and I couldn't see more than ten yards in any direction. Finally, I decided to make a fire and stay where I was all night. Then suddenly the sky was lit up with a ball of crimson flame which, describing a lurid parabola, sank with a shower of sparks to the ground. Thank Heaven! it was a Very light, and obviously fired from the camp. Without stopping to think why it had been fired, I set off hastily while the direction of the light was still fixed in my mind. It was followed every minute or so by another and another, sometimes green, sometimes red, and sometimes white. In twenty minutes I was back in camp, to receive the disturbing news that Carey-Thomas and Mac were missing. Their machine carried only three hours' petrol, and this must have been exhausted at least half an hour ago. Of course, there was every chance of

76 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

their having had a forced landing well within our own lines, but it might be days and even weeks before we heard definite news. The mechanics kept on firing lights at intervals throughout the night, with the very slender hope that the missing airmen had landed quite near to camp. The morning brought no news, however. Taking a car I went out to bring in my buck, but somehow or other the bush had lost all its charm, and nothing would shake off the fit of blue depression that was on me.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOROGORO.

LATER in the afternoon orders came through that the Squadron must be prepared to leave for Morogoro, which had been occupied by our force without resistance. An officer was sent on immediately to prepare an areodrome, and I left early the next day in charge of three of our cars with mechanics and stores. We found the road badly cut up by our heavy transport and the going very rough. Whenever the cars stopped we were immediately attacked by clouds of tsetse-fly, so it can be imagined that we did not stop more often than necessary. Later in the afternoon the pretty white villas of Morogoro came in sight, and, striking a fine metalled road, we made good speed into the town. The main street was crowded with natives, and I was very surprised to see quite a number of white German

78 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

women, apparently not in the least perturbed by the presence of our troops.

One of these ladies, recognising that I was an airman by the badge on my tunic, looked me frankly in the face and elevated her snobbish nose in an aristocratic sneer. As I had not set eyes on a member of the fair sex for nearly six months, I blushed violently at the familiarity and turned my head.

We discovered that the R.F.C. was to be billeted in the Station Hotel, whither we made our way immediately. It was quite a fair-sized building, but in a shocking condition of disorder and filth. It was furnished with a chair, two beds, one table, a sausage-machine, and a heller-in-the-slot automatic piano, which gave an accomplished rendering of the Hymn of Hate as we entered the room.

The proposed aerodrome was a fairly level clearing at the foot of the mountain, which the Germans had used as a parade-ground. Nearly 400 natives were now busy on it, and it promised to be ready very shortly. Walking down to the railway station I found that considerable damage had been done by our bombs. Several craters could be seen in the very centre

of the track and sidings, and all the adjacent buildings were damaged. The Germans before they left had set fire to their stores and also to their arsenal; and bombs, grenades, live shells, boxes of dynamite which had not exploded, littered the ground in every direction.

Standing on the line in the station was a very interesting motor trolley. The engine had been smashed about with a sledge-hammer, and in an aimless way I tried to push the whole trolley along the line to see the actual extent of the damage. It would not budge an inch, however, and as the sun was hot I did not try again, and left it. The nigger who tried to move this trolley a few hours later was evidently much stronger than I, for he managed to fire off the mine that had been thoughtfully placed by the German engineers under the wheels. They never found that nigger at all.

The aeroplanes arrived in a few days, and one morning I set out for my first trip in a Henri Farman. The H.F. pusher is much more powerful than the old B.E. 2. C, and so previously it had been reserved for the heaviest observers. These people for various reasons had been given ground jobs, and during the last week or two

80 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

practically the whole of the observation work had devolved on Mac, Pawson, and myself.

With Mac still missing, Pawson and I looked like having a busy time. In the Henri Farman, pilot and observer sit out in front of the planes in a bath-shaped *nacelle*, and although one gets a wider field for observation there are many drawbacks. For one thing it is horribly cold, and again the observer's seat is a particularly uncomfortable one. But it was not until we got into the air that I began to appreciate the real discomforts of this machine. Because of the mountains near by, the air at Morogoro is very bumpy, and as soon as we got off the ground we were tossed about in a most nerve-racking fashion. Our orders were to fly round the eastern slopes of the mountains, strike the Mikesse road, and follow it until we located the exact whereabouts of the eastern column, which instead of closing on Morogoro had pushed straight on. It took us half an hour to reach the road, and although by then we had climbed nearly to 4000 feet, not for one second had the bumps abated. My pilot, Van der Spuy, had to exert his full strength at times to pull the controls over to neutralise these bumps,

and there were occasions when I could swear we should never recover. It was exactly like being in a small yacht carrying a large spread of canvas on a very squally day. Finally we saw our troops, the head of the column just about to enter the eastern foothills of the Uluguru Mountains. We had now to see if there were any Hun positions astride the road ahead. From the machine the hills below looked exactly like the rough rind of a pineapple, folded and pitted in a very bold but regular manner. They were covered in dense forest, but the valleys were more open, containing elephant-grass, and occasionally native plantations. With my field-glasses glued to the road I was not long in spotting our advance-guard, and three miles farther on a peculiar clearing on a hill-side. Minute examination was almost impossible owing to the bumps, but a line of rifle-pits covered with grass was easily visible. One or two Cape-carts, and what looked suspiciously like the limber of a gun, were half hidden under some trees on the roadside immediately behind the position, and signs of something indefinite moving under these trees confirmed my opinion that the place was occupied.

82 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

My pilot now brought the machine down to about 600 feet, and although we were literally hanging on like grim death to the gunwales of the *nacelle* because of the bumps, we had no difficulty this time in seeing at least a company of German askaris trying to hide under the trees. The position was quite a strong one, and likely to prove a very formidable obstacle to our advance. As we climbed, I made a rough sketch of it, and scribbling a brief report, placed the two in a message bag. Then we lost no time in flying back to the column, and diving low over what we thought looked like Divisional Headquarters, I dropped the bag, and watched its gaily-coloured bunting go floating down to the ground. Several people rushed towards it, and we saw them wave an acknowledgment of receipt. We now turned for home. The bumps gradually grew worse and worse as the sun rose higher in the sky, until at last I started wondering how long the struts and wires would stand the strain. Then suddenly we got the most terrific bump of all. The machine dropped like a stone, two hundred feet at least, and at such a rate that my field-glasses were whipped off my shoulder, and were caught in the rigging two

or three yards behind. The pilot's glasses were held by the strap on his flying cap, and for two seconds they were *suspended in the air above his head*. It was the most horrifying sight I had witnessed in my life. If our belts had not held we should have been lifted completely out of our seats, and I shuddered to think how many times during the trip I had loosened my belt in order to get a clearer vision of the ground. The next half-hour was an anxious one, and when our wheels finally touched the ground at Morogoro, I felt considerably relieved.

When the machine was examined several parts were found to be badly strained, and the steel bolts securing my seat to the *nacelle* were shorn completely across.

A few minutes after our return we were overjoyed to hear that Carey-Thomas and Mac had been found, and were practically no worse for their adventure. They had had a very thrilling time, however. Their engine had failed just a few miles inside our lines, and they had crashed in the bush. Missing the road, they had been completely lost for nearly three days. Their scanty supply of food was soon exhausted, and a hartebeeste they shot was little consolation, as

84 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

they had no knife to cut through the tough skin. Water was their greatest problem, but by spreading a Burberry on a bush one evening during a slight shower they managed to collect a pint or so. They were constantly attacked by swarms of tsetse-flies, and their arms and faces were swollen beyond all recognition. Still that was better, they said, than being captured by the Huns.

The Germans were supposed to be making for a place called Kissaki, to the south of Uluguru mountain mass, one half of the force proceeding by the Mikesse road as we have already seen, the other half taking the western route. Part of General Van Deventer's Division was in pursuit of this latter German column. The whole of the country through which they were marching was clothed in dense elephant forest, impassable for wheeled transport, and it can be imagined that the maintenance of supplies was an impossible task. No one was in a better position to appreciate the terrible hardships that these men were enduring than ourselves. Road there was none, water was scarce, food was unobtainable except in minute quantities, and the only things that really did exist in abundance were German machine-gun

vests, tsetse-flies, mosquitoes, maggot-flies, malaria, dysentery, and a few dozen other diseases. If a man became really ill, it meant being carried in a blanket between two niggers for miles and miles under the blazing sun. There was never any such thing as a mail to cheer a poor devil up. I can heartily recommend that journey from Morogoro to Kissaki to any of those kind gentlemen who find it so easy to sit in an arm-chair and describe the East African Campaign as a joy-ride.

Thank Heaven, I never had to march on the western route to Kissaki. Flying over it was enough for me. The elephant forest is continuous for nearly forty miles, and in that stretch there is not a square yard where a machine could be landed or even crashed with safety. The trees grow to an immense height, the surface of the ground is hilly, and abounds in deep ravines. Kissaki we found to be a small settlement around a military fort. It was reported, however, that the Germans had removed all the machinery from the Morogoro arsenal to this place, so that it was bombed continuously by our machines. Apparently they had got quite a respectable amount of artillery there as well, for they archied us intensely on our first trip. However, I was able

86 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

to spot a formidable line of camouflaged trenches across the road which Van Derventer's force would take, and a detailed sketch of this was handed in to the General Staff, and also details of the various roads leading from the settlement. On this occasion, instead of flying back over the forest, we followed the road leading round the mountain flank through Tulo to Mikesse, thus making a complete circuit of the Uluguru Mountains. This was the route usually taken by pilots on their frequent bombing raids to Kissaki.

Rainstorms and heavy clouds began seriously to interfere with our flying operations, and for nearly ten days I never made a single trip. This so-called resting business is an infinitely bigger strain than flying, and my nerves got very jumpy. The time began to hang. There was very little shooting to be had in the neighbourhood, although I had one glorious afternoon in a maize-field which yielded three and a half brace of guinea-fowl.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE MGETA VALLEY.

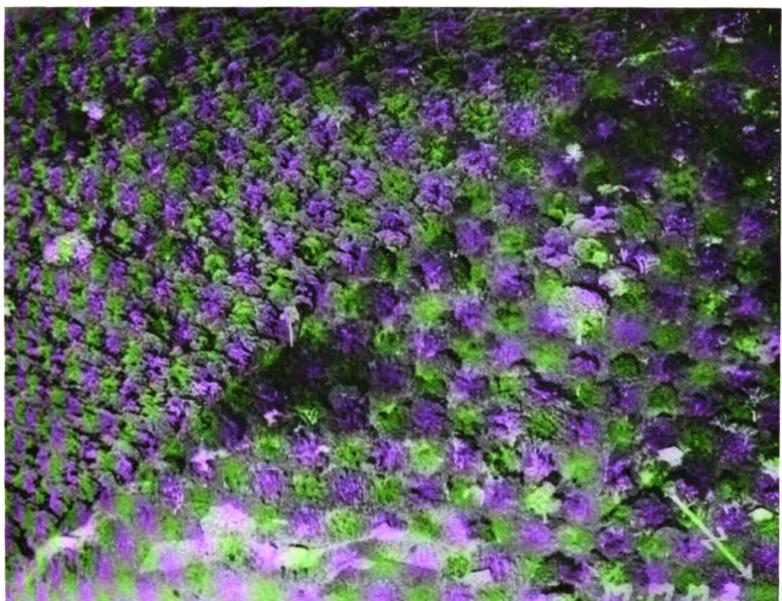
A FAIR aerodrome had been reported at Tulo, and Mac had been sent on to prepare it. He arrived back a few days later suffering from a bad attack of fever, but reporting that everything was ready to receive the machines. B Flight, consisting of B.E.2. C's, left for Tulo therefore as soon as the weather improved, and they commenced operations under the immediate control of General Hoskins. There was no trained observer attached to this Flight, and I asked that I might join it. Nothing happened, however, until one day General Hoskins arrived by aeroplane from Tulo with Carey-Thomas, and requested that either Mac, Pawson, or I might be sent down immediately.

As Pawson and Mac were now ill, I left by car the next morning. The journey was a most

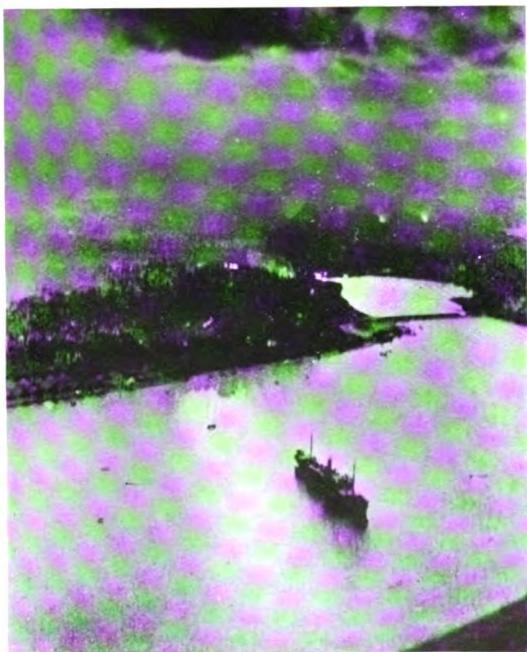
88 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

interesting one. The forest scenery, as soon as we got into the hills, was simply magnificent, and defies all description. So tall and densely matted with foliage were the trees, that the ground below was almost dark. In this cool shade grew the most luxuriant tree-ferns and other cryptogams, whose broad green fronds made a very restful sight to our eyes after the sun-bleached veldt.

At last we arrived at the edge of the deep escarpment where the Uluguru foothills fall away into the vast plain of the Mgeta and Rufiji valleys. Down this cliff a most wonderful road had been made by General Sheppard, and it was known as Sheppard's Pass. The view from the summit of the road was very fine. One could look right across the plain to the Mgeta river and beyond this again to the flat valley of the Rufiji. Tulo lay practically at our feet, and, quite near, two or three tiny lakes shimmered like molten metal in the sun. Having overhauled his breaks—a very wise precaution—my driver now commenced the descent, winding slowly down the mountain-side, negotiating the most hair-raising bends, sometimes creeping so near to the edge of the precipice that my



Dense bush seen from an Aeroplane.



Sunset over Daresalam, taken by the Author.

heart came into my mouth. It took us fifteen minutes to reach the plain, and once there a marked difference in the temperature was noticeable. The vegetation too was totally different from that of the mountains. The forest gave way to riotous jungle, out of which grew the extraordinary bare giant trunks of the Borassus palm. The ground was very swampy, and for many yards the road consisted simply of huge palm logs that had been placed on the soft ground by the engineers. I arrived at Tulo an hour or so after leaving the foot of the pass, and reported to Carey-Thomas, who was now in command of the Flight.

The sight of the aerodrome did not exactly fill me with enthusiasm. It was simply a dried-up swamp with a sluggish muddy river winding round it. However, a fairly comfortable camp had been built, and so long as there was to be plenty of flying, what did it matter.

It appeared that the enemy was now holding all the bridges and fords of the Mgeta river, and as the immediate front was clothed in thick elephant-grass, it was quite impossible to tell from the ground the extent and direction of his trenches. Our artillery therefore was

90 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

blind, and the General Staff was anxious to have a sketch-map of the whole river front.

It was decided that a reconnaissance should be carried out as soon as possible, and early next morning I set out, with the A.D.C. as pilot. I always felt happy with the A.D.C. He was a typical "East African"—strong, quiet, and unassuming, never given to useless stunting or display, yet always showing faultless judgment and flying skill in an emergency. His landings were invariably perfect, and never once did I see him hesitate in the air. With a pilot like that flying was a delight, and that morning I felt particularly happy. The call of the air is like the call of the sea—irresistible to those who hear it; and now, after nearly three weeks' mental torture, I was up once more—taking deep breaths of the icy cold air, gazing in rapture at the magnificent scenery, the miles upon miles of green-brown veldt that rolled into the grey haze of the southern horizon, the rounded granite cliffs of the Uluguru Mountains towering above my head dark and forbidding, the blue vault of the sky packed with round fleecy puffs of cloud that reminded me of a delicate piece of Wedgwood china.

The engine, too, was pulling well, and very soon we struck the Mgeta river and the road which led across it from the Tulo-Kissaki road southwards to the Rufiji. This was one of the roads which the Huns were defending, for its possession was of vital importance to them at this stage of the campaign, when they were busy getting all their stores and personnel safely south of the Rufiji. A most elaborate system of trenches showed up, thanks to the excellent light and lack of mist, with remarkable clearness, and soon I was very busy sketching it.

The question which very naturally rises in the reader's mind is, "Why didn't we photograph it?" As a matter of fact our photography had been on the whole a dismal failure. Plates had been sent out unsuitably packed to stand the rigours of the tropics, our cameras were not of the latest pattern, and, a more fatal thing still, we had no photographic officer. We had one or two excellent photography men; but just as they became more or less settled down to their job malaria would knock them out, and some amateur would have to take their place with fatal results. Later on in the campaign, when a better pattern of camera was sent out, I believe some excellent

92 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

pictures were made ; but I never saw anything to compare with the wonderful photographs taken by the R.N.A.S. Seaplane Squadron at Zanzibar.

Sketching from an aeroplane moving at seventy miles an hour is not altogether easy ; and in this type of machine you must have a perfect understanding with the pilot, otherwise, just as you are putting the finishing touches to a line of dug-outs, for example, the whole thing is hidden by one of the planes. It was a very pleasant task, however, and of course extremely interesting. First of all, one must draw lines representing the general trend of each continuous trench ; then the main features—such as emplacements, dug-outs, observation posts—must be put in with great care. Then, using field-glasses, one must search every inch of the position, identifying, if possible, the "dummy" works, ammunition dumps, gun positions ; the exact nature of the vegetation ; if grass, its height and if it will burn easily ; if bush, what amount of cover it would offer to friend or foe. One had always to be on the look-out, too, for porter camps behind a position like this. A couple of bombs there might mean the desertion of two or three hundred of these extremely valuable persons.

Sometimes the flash of a machine-gun would catch my attention, but this never happened unless we came down very low, which on an occasion like this was not necessary. Three thousand five hundred feet was our average height, and it was very rarely indeed that a machine was hit.

My rough sketch completed, we now returned to Tulo, where I made a more detailed draft. Immediately after lunch we set out once more, and while the A.D.C. circled round and round the position I put in the finishing touches. Signaling to him when I had finished, he now steered for a military camp that we had spotted at a place called Kiderengwa, three miles south of the Mgeta, on the Rufiji road. On this camp he placed four bombs within a circle of a hundred yards, a very fine bit of shooting. Two or three days later an Intelligence scout reported that three white Huns and five askaris had been killed on this occasion, and we thereupon started a Flight Game Register.

The Staff were greatly surprised when they saw our map, and seemed quite incredulous. But General Hoskins himself went up sometime later, and pronounced it correct practically in every

94 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

detail. For nearly a fortnight I made daily reconnaissances over the Mgeta, extending the map as far east as Kissaki, and filling in some new detail on each occasion. It was soon discovered that the best possible weapon for driving the Hun out of his trenches and annoying him in general was the petrol-bomb. This is a tin cylinder, containing several pints of petrol, which is ignited on contact with the ground by means of an explosive cartridge fixed in the head of the bomb. The burning liquid spreads over a very large area, and it naturally had a deadly effect on the sun-dried elephant-grass. We used them when a breeze was blowing, dropping them in a line, at intervals of a hundred yards or so, to windward of the trenches or camp. The occupants would very naturally rush panic-stricken before the terrible wall of flame which the wind swept down, and then our artillery would assist by throwing shrapnel over.

CHAPTER X.

MIXED SPORTS AT TULO.

Good sport was available at Tulo. The plain over which we flew every day swarmed with reed-buck and hartebeeste, and on our homeward journey we always noted carefully the exact position of the best herds. Our reports written and handed over to the despatch-rider, we would wander off with our guns, and usually have no difficulty in finding the game and in securing some meat. I shot eland, hartebeeste, wildebeeste, wart-hog, and reed-buck, all within a mile of camp. There were fish in the river, but so small that it was impossible to catch them with the huge hooks I had at my disposal. I therefore rigged up a wicker trap, and placing in it a few pieces of meat for bait, threw it into the water. Hauling in a quarter of an hour later I found in it about a dozen fine crayfish. As a

96 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

corpse had been seen in the river only a day or two before, no one cared to tackle them. Some natives, however, used to come in every day with quantities of fish, which they said they caught in a lake near by, evidently one of the large pools I had seen from the top of Sheppard's Pass, and which we could see every day from the aeroplane. I therefore determined to pay it a visit. I found it to be well worth the hot and tiring march of nearly four miles through native plantations and dense patches of elephant-grass. With its placid surface reflecting not only the luxuriant jungle and creeper-hung trees and palms that fringed its edge, but also the blue-grey ridges of the Uluguru Mountains, it looked surpassingly beautiful. It swarmed with fish, hippos, and crocodiles, and I was lucky enough to see fishing operations in progress. The niggers had yards and yards of what might be described as portable fencing, and rolled into cylinders just like a roll of wire-netting. Wading out from the shore, and unrolling two lots of this fence as they went, they made a funnel-shaped barrier, the ends widening out from the shore into the deeper water. Then the whole crowd of them dashed into the lake, beating the water with

sticks and uttering the most piercing yells and cat-calls,—the idea being to frighten the fish into the funnel, and also to scare the crocs away.

After keeping up this hullabaloo for nearly ten minutes, they began to work gradually along the funnel, bringing the end in with them as they did so. As they got nearer to the apex, I saw that the whole water was absolutely seething with fish: some were trying to fight their way back between the legs of the niggers, others were trying to leap the fence. At last they were driven into a space about ten feet square. A nigger bent down under the water and strung together the bottom edges of the fence, another did the same at the top, and the fish were caught in the cage thus formed. This was now detached from the rest of the fencing, and the natives brought it slowly into the shore and dragged it up on to the bank. There must have been nearly half a ton of fish, the predominant species being a kind of carp. There were a few eels and several cat-fish. They were shared out among the fishermen with an amount of argument and picturesque cuss-words that made me jealous for the fair fame of our beloved Billingsgate.

98 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Although we had given the General Staff a good idea of the whereabouts of the German trenches on the Mgeta, our map was not accurate enough for artillery work, and we were waiting patiently for our wireless equipment so that we could carry out a target registration. But the recent heavy rains had done so much damage to the Sheppard's Pass road, that it was impossible to send the heavy wireless lorry forward, and we had to think of some other method of directing the fire of the guns. It was finally decided to do what we could with Very lights. A Very light is a modification of the old Roman Candle of 5th of November fame, and it is fired by means of a huge fearsome-looking pistol. By using certain combinations of the various colours, red, green, and white, a code is made by which the airman can tell the gunner whether he is shooting over, short, right, or left of the target.

We had arranged with the battery commander at Duthumi to carry out the shoot one Wednesday morning, but just as we were leaving this was cancelled, and we were ordered to leave on a very urgent reconnaissance around the camp of Kiderengwa, the place that the A.D.C. had

bombed with such good effect, and near to which a deserter had reported that the Huns were hastily building trenches. As we were probably going to attack this place within the next few days, it was highly desirable that this report should be confirmed or otherwise. We were there in half an hour, and saw almost immediately that the deserter had not lied, for a very extensive and powerful trench line, with head cover and dug-outs, was under construction. We came down very low in order that my sketch might be made as detailed as possible, and then we returned home.

The Staff was pleased with the report that we sent in, and they arranged with the battery that the shoot should commence at 4 P.M. the same afternoon. I was looking forward to it with great enthusiasm. The A.D.C. was to be my pilot, and we were eagerly discussing our plans after lunch, when our hearts sank to hear a terrific clap of thunder. Rushing out of the mess, we saw that a very severe storm was approaching, and resigning ourselves to the inevitable, we retired to our respective tents to curse the climate of this country to the limit of our not particularly limited vocabularies. By 3 P.M., however, the storm had passed, yet, although

100 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

the sun shone brightly overhead, several other storms could be seen travelling over the plain. A very black one hung over the Mgeta.

"Well, what about it?" said the A.D.C.

"Storm's bound to clear before we get there," I replied.

"Come on then, before a message comes cancelling it!"

We climbed into the machine, and were off the ground before the remainder of the Flight had awakened from their afternoon siesta.

We dodged no less than three heavy storms before we reached Duthumi, where the battery was located; and as we looked back towards Tulo, we saw that the aerodrome was entirely hidden in a deluge of rain.

We had arranged to fire at three targets—five shots at each: first, a sharp bend in the front-line trench; second, a foot-bridge leading over the river to some dug-outs; and third, a large porters' camp that we had found hidden away in the jungle. We had already judged the approximate range of each target, and supplied this information to the gunners.

The position of the battery was marked by large pieces of white cloth spread on the ground,

and flying outwards from the place towards the first target I gave the signal—"Fire!"

It seemed ages and ages before we saw the green flash and black smoke puff of the bursting shell. It had fallen nearly two hundred yards short, and to the right. Bang!—bang!—bang!—went my pistol, and the gaily-coloured lights went streaming down to earth. Reading their message, the gunner now increased his range and deflected to the left. But he had given too much of both, for the next shell burst a hundred yards over, and a long way to the left. Signalling this information as quickly as possible, we turned once more for the target. The next shot was a decided improvement—fifty yards over and dead in line. "Next time does it!" we said to ourselves, and sure enough it did, for the fourth shell burst in the trench exactly at the prearranged point. The fifth shell fell a little short, but that did not worry us much, and we got ready for the second target—the bridge.

It *may* have been due to our accurate approximation of the range, or it *may* have been pure luck—but the very first shot burst directly on the bridge and destroyed it completely! It

102 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

must have been luck, I suppose, for in spite of the fact that we had signalled O.K. (which means "Bull's-eye"), all the remaining shells fell either wide, short, or over. By this time the Germans were becoming slightly annoyed, and shrapnel started to whistle through the air around our machine. The last target proved the most interesting of the three. The camp was carefully hidden amongst the dense jungle, and it was only by flying low some days before that we had discovered its existence.

The first two shots went very wide, but the remainder fell in the centre of a group of grass huts which almost immediately burst into flame. The surviving occupants ran out terror-stricken, seeking for shelter amongst the forest under-growth; but as this was burning in parts, they were forced finally to come into the open. Leaving the battery to deal with these poor wretches, we made for home, for another storm was rapidly bearing down upon us from the Uluguru Mountains. I could count no less than five of these storms between the Mgeta and the Rufiji river. Each consisted of a mighty mass of nimbus, rising perhaps to a height of 10,000 feet, pitch dark in the centre,

but turning to silver-grey at the base, from which the rain fell in what looked exactly like a solid column to the earth. They seemed to move in broad circles at a rate varying from 15 to 40 miles an hour. On the ground their approach was heralded by a fierce cool wind, but in the air one experienced very severe gusts and bumps within a quarter of a mile of the rain column.

Between the storms the sun shone serenely, and the rainbow effects were sometimes magnificent. From an aeroplane rainbows are inverted, and on this occasion there must have been a dozen perfect ones within as many miles.

It was a very wonderful experience, flying along between these storms, seeing great electric sparks ripping through the nimbus, hearing the thunder crash loud above the roar of the engine. Now and again, in dodging about, we passed through the tail-end of the rain, and the big heavy drops battered on the machine like rifle bullets. We were relieved to see that the aerodrome was bathed in sunshine, but our own emotions did not compare with the relief of the people on the ground when they saw us land in safety.

Torrential rain had fallen ever since we had left, and so severe had been the storm that they were certain we must have been driven down. Even the General had come up to congratulate us on a safe return, and it was very hard indeed to convince them all that for the last two hours we had not been out of the sunshine for one brief second.

A detailed report of the shoot was written and sent off to the battery, and when the gunners compared our observations with their own range records, they were able to obtain the exact range of practically any given point in the German position.

The guns, therefore, had been given their sight, and now they could throw over as much stuff as they liked with the certain knowledge of hitting something of military importance every time. We learned later that the moral effect of this shoot of ours on the Hun askari had been very great. They could not see the connection between our firework display and the bursting shells; our bombs they could watch leaving the machine, but this new "stunt" was utterly beyond their comprehension, and anything that a nigger does not comprehend is

promptly labelled "medicine." The *ndege*¹ men, therefore, were medicine men, people to be held in very high respect. I often think that we might have taken tremendous advantage of the superstitious nature of the black man in this campaign. Our machines should have been painted in flaming colours, and decorated with dreadful eyes and dragon's tails. Our armoured cars, too, might have been transformed into hideous prehistoric beasts, which, fitted with a couple of Klaxon horns, would have struck more terror into the askaris' hearts than all the machine-guns and artillery in the world. For the next native war I humbly suggest the inauguration of a Department of Military Psychology, under the directorship of a Drury Lane Pantomime artist.

A day or two after the shoot I had a most thrilling adventure. All the machines had gone off bombing, and taking my rifle I set off for a morning's hunt. Three miles from the camp I managed to get an eland, an antelope weighing as much as our ordinary domestic ox, and marking the place I turned back for the camp in order to obtain a car to bring the carcass

¹ "Bird" men.

in. I had not walked more than a mile when I was overjoyed to see a number of askaris coming towards me. No doubt I should be able to get one of them to take a message to the camp and save me a hot and very tiring walk. Thinking that they might change their direction, I climbed a tall ant-heap and waved my hands. To my surprise they immediately set off as fast as they could—*away from me*. Still puzzled, I fired off my rifle, and this time they simply took to their heels and bolted like a herd of gazelle.

Feeling distinctly annoyed, I set off once more for camp, and soon I sighted some more askaris, this time under a white officer. They seemed very excited, and as soon as I got within speaking distance the officer simply bombarded me with questions.

How many were there?—were there any whites?—how far off were they when I fired?—had they any porters?—and so on and so on.

It then dawned upon me that the people whose attention I had been trying to attract so energetically were *Huns*—a small patrol which had evidently been reconnoitring the camp and possibly our aerodrome.

The work on the Mgeta river still went on

when the weather permitted. Sometimes the pilots would go out alone on a bombing raid, but rarely did a day go by without my having at least one glorious spin amongst the clouds. On one occasion I was out with a young pilot named Mossop, a pale thin-faced lad, who nevertheless was one of the most skilful and daring airmen in the Squadron. The air that day was laden with small puffy clouds through which we frequently flew. It was not at all a disagreeable sensation: near the edge of the cloud we were bumped a bit, then immediately we were shrouded in a dull-grey damp mist, which very quickly lightened until we saw the blue sky once more. We must have passed through a dozen of these clouds, when suddenly we were faced with one much larger than the rest. Thinking that we should negotiate it just as we had done the others, the pilot did not alter his course, and in half a second we were in the thick of it. Everything became beastly dark and the moisture soon changed to rain, which commenced to swirl round our wind screens in a very unpleasant manner. Still we pushed on, and at last we began to think that it was high time that the ground and the sky were

108 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

appearing. No sign of either came, however, and after nearly five minutes I began to get nervous. The Uluguru Mountains could not be far away, and at this height we might easily fly straight into them. I therefore shouted back to the pilot—

“For Heaven’s sake shove her nose down!”

He immediately throttled back and we commenced to glide earthwards. Down, down, we dived through the swirling rain, until at last I began to think that my worst fears were to be realised. Then came a lightening of the cloud, and then a ragged hole through which I could see the good solid earth. Diving through this hole we were quickly in clear air once more, and then we realised what a ghastly fate we had just escaped. We were well up in the mountain slopes, hardly 400 feet from the tops of the trees, and had we carried on for another minute we should have flown *straight into the cliffs*.

I had funny dreams that night.

CHAPTER XI.

A FLIGHT TO THE RUFIJI.

THE Germans were busily engaged in getting all their stores south of the Rufiji river, over which, at a place called Kibambawe, they had built a bridge. An aerial reconnaissance had been carried out over Kibambawe from Morogoro by Van der Spuy and Hewitt (one of the "heavies"), and they had gleaned some valuable information. At the very moment of their arrival there, hundreds of German porters were engaged in towing a big lighter up the stream, and with the machine flying at about 400 feet Hewitt had thrown them into utter consternation by means of his Browning pistol. For some reason or other our aeroplanes were not fitted with Lewis guns, a great disadvantage I always thought.

The Staff was now desirous of having another

110 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

reconnaissance over this place, and at the first opportunity I was sent out with Albu as pilot. Flying first of all to the Duthumi position we struck the Rufiji road, and followed this to its junction with the Kissaki road near to a large military camp called Beho Beho.

There was very little of interest here, and we wasted no time. Keeping within sight of the main road, we had no difficulty in finding the way, although our objective was as yet completely hidden by the cloud-pack which floated in the air 500 feet below. The ground immediately underneath was obscured only at intervals, but rarely could we see objects outside a radius of half a mile. Ten minutes after leaving Beho Beho we passed over an extraordinary lake. There was no sign of vegetation on or near its banks, which seemed to be encrusted with some white saline substance, and wisps of steam were rising from its surface. We discovered later that it was a hot soda lake.

At last we sighted the river, gleaming like silver through a gap in the clouds, and I began to feel deliriously happy. After all, there was something very wonderful about being able to fly miles and miles ahead of our forces, looking

A Flight to the Rufiji. 111

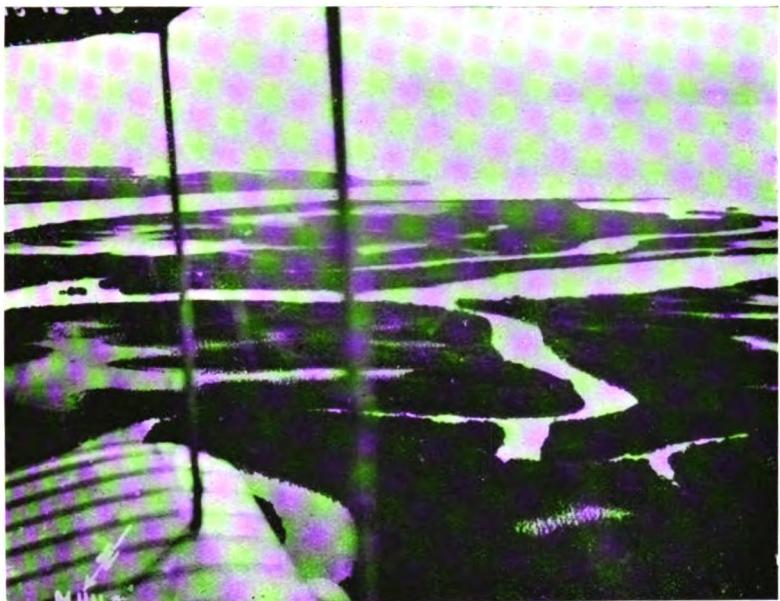
on things of tremendous military importance, gazing as it were into the very soul of the enemy. The aeroplane is the X-Rays of modern warfare, and on its skilful use depends the diagnosis of the enemy's plans and intentions. It was almost ludicrous to think that a couple of lads like ourselves, to whom soldiering was merely an accident of the war, should be able to see sights and make reports over which grey-haired and battle-scarred generals would ponder.

It was not long before we saw the bridge, or rather the bridges, of Kibambawe. There were two, connected by a sandy island lying in mid-stream. There were groups of large stone huts on either side of the river, and a line of trenches ran along the southern bank. There was little sign of movement, and to all appearances the place was unoccupied. But the Germans by this time had learnt what to expect when they heard the drone of our engine in the sky, and the first thing they did in any camp was to prepare strong dug-outs, to which they retired at the sign of approaching danger. The niggers, on the other hand, were left to shift for themselves, and were told to hide in the bush. The water of the Rufiji was crystal clear, and the

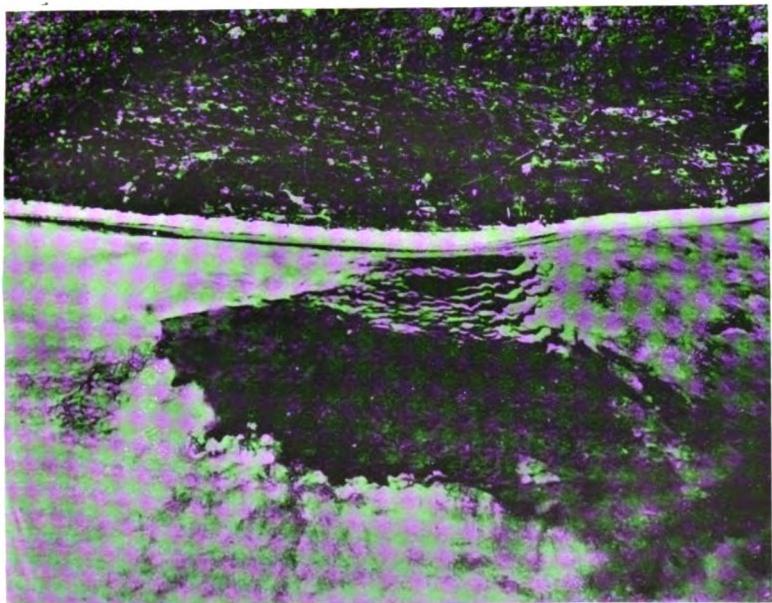
112 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

shoals and rocks of the river - bed were revealed with remarkable detail.

In order to make a sketch we dived down underneath the cloud-pack, but the air was so bumpy that we had to climb back immediately, and I had to take advantage of the gaps in the cloud to complete my drawing of the bridge, trenches, and camp. Hardly had I finished when the engine commenced to miss and vibrate in a most alarming manner. There are occasions when the pleasures of flight fade like the dew at sunrise. As an observer, one's sole interest in life is immediately concentrated on the ground, searching for a landing - place, and in East Africa one never found such things. The whole of the country between the Rufiji and the Mgeta too, was wild, waterless, and uninhabited, and the prospects of a forced landing was not an agreeable one. Still, the engine sounded by no means hopeless, although that beastly vibration grated horribly on one's nervous system. Naturally the pilot had turned homewards at the first sign of trouble, but we seemed to be crawling along at a snail's-pace. It always feels like that with a failing engine over the enemy's lines—just as though you were trailing a sheet-anchor behind.

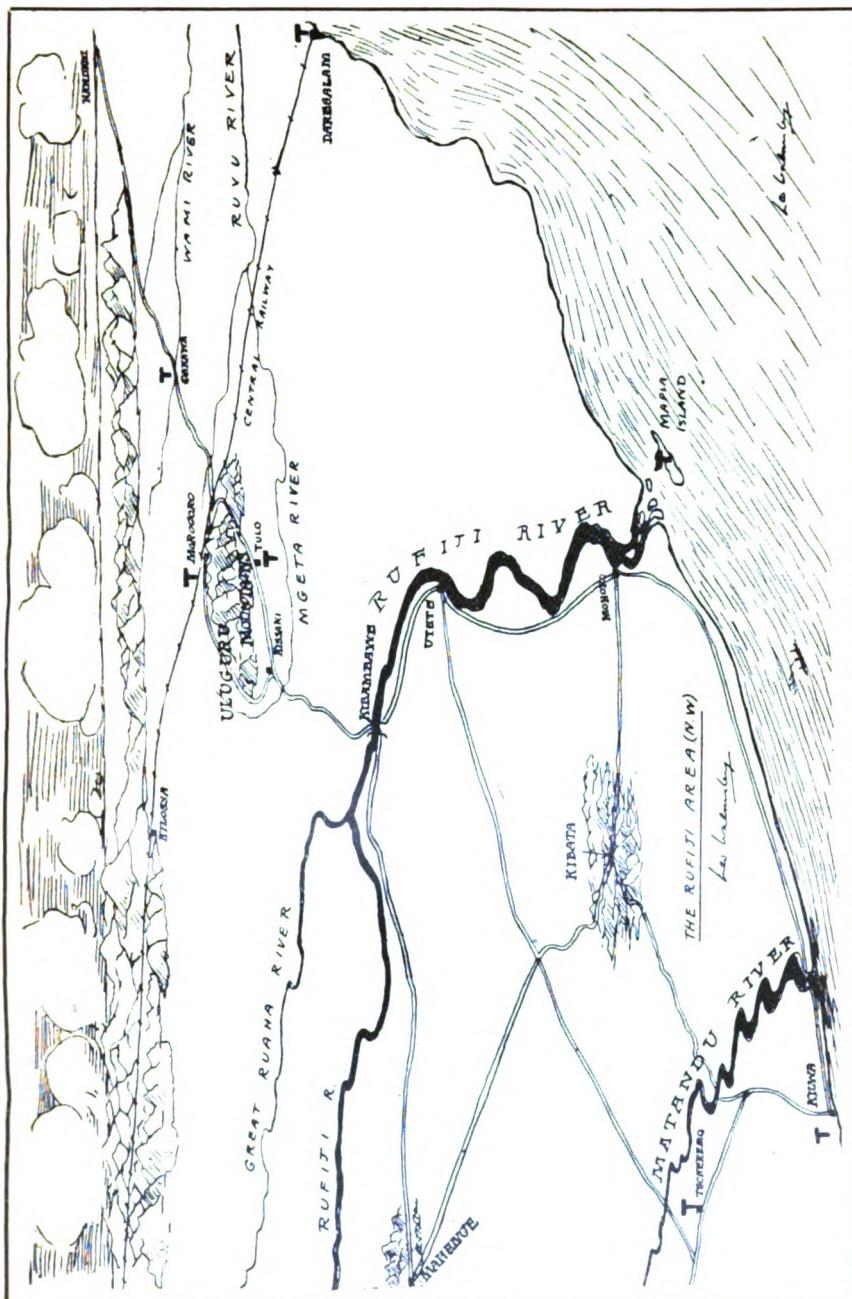


Mouth of the Rufiji river.



A view on the coast, showing remarkable clearness of sea.

Note coral reefs and weed-banks.



Bird's-eye view of Rufiji area.

Drawn by the Author.

T signifies Aerodrome.

Many long hours seemed to pass before the Tulo aerodrome hove in sight, and when we finally switched off to land, our respective sighs sounded loud above the whistle of the wires and struts.

A couple of days later I returned from a successful shoot to find that in my absence half the camp had been burnt down. My own grass hut and everything inside it, including more than a hundred films, my diaries for the last four years, my cameras, field-glasses, shot-gun, and all my kit, were completely destroyed. It was a stunning blow, and above all things I wept for my diaries and films. I was simply left with what I had on—boots, socks, slacks, shirt, and helmet.

The shock of it all brought on a nervous breakdown, and a day or two later I was ordered to take a month's rest at the Convalescent Home in Zanzibar.

On the third day following my disastrous fire at Tulo I arrived at Morogoro, where I was informed that I might leave for the coast by the evening train. The only accommodation proved to be the tender of the locomotive, the most comfortable regions of which were already occupied

by a number of Staff officers and their servants. However, Maganga very optimistically slung my kit (water-bottles, officers, for the use of one, haversacks O.F.U.O. 1) on to the coals, and staggering over a wriggling and cursing heap of humanity I managed to find an unclaimed space on a nigger's leg, and there I settled down for the journey. We left about 11 P.M., by which time there were no less than thirty-six people on board the tender. It was an unspeakable night, but the sight of a very dapper red-tabbed staff-major trying to sleep, with one leg cocked up at an angle of 90 degs. and his head resting on an iron shovel, made up for many things. At nine in the morning we pulled into the station of Daresalam. Without waiting to explore the town, I rushed round to the Naval Office and obtained permission to embark on a whaler which was leaving immediately for Zanzibar. For once I felt the lack of kit to be a distinct advantage, for I got on board just as the anchor was weighed.

How good it was to taste the sea air and to feel the cool monsoon playing on one's cheeks; to hear the plaintive cries of the sea-birds; to watch the bright blue waves of the Indian

Ocean dancing in the sunlight; the gossamer-winged flying-fish gliding joyously through the air; the great blue-backed porpoises gamboling madly in front of the bows.

It was late in the afternoon when the dazzling white walls of the town rose up as if by magic from the sea. Gradually a thin green line of cocoanut palms became visible, and then the masts and rigging of dhows and little ships. Soon we could make out the Sultan's Palace, from which the tired "Hunter of the East" was now unwinding his "nose of light." A wonderful scent of cloves, cocoanut, and incense assailed my nostrils as I stood gazing towards the shore; darkness had now fallen, and a hundred twinkling lights were reflected in the softly lapping waters which encircled the town; the dull boom of a distant tom-tom, the weird wailing of a muezzin from the mosque, the musical babble of many voices were borne in perfect harmony through the still warm air, and I began to feel myself sinking into a hypnotic trance. . . .

"Come on, Flying Corps, the boat's waiting for you!" broke in the gruff hearty voice of the skipper. "Where's your kit?"

116 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

"In my pocket!" I replied, with a feeble smile.

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The convalescent home, one of the Sultan's numerous ex-palaces, was magnificent. I spent the time chiefly in spending money, exploring the bazaars and the old town, sketching, zoologising in the coral reefs, and fishing in a ramshackle old dug-out. On the fourth day I developed a sharp attack of fever and was "admitted" to the European hospital. The "ward" to which I was detailed was a tiny room containing two beds, in one of which lay a very obvious senior naval officer, who glared at me in a most unsympathetic way as I entered.

"Good afternoon, sir!" I ventured.

No answer, but the glare developed into a scowl.

I proceeded to undress, feeling not a little embarrassed. The air seemed charged with electricity. Silently I prayed for the speedy arrival of the nurse,—perhaps she would—well, introduce us. No nurse arrived, however, and I made the change from shorts into pyjamas with as much dignity as I could muster, feeling

all the time like a night-bomber in the glare of the enemy's searchlights.

"Umph—Flying Corps, I expect."

The voice gave me such a start that I knocked over the bedside table, and a collection of medicine bottles and glasses crashed on the floor with a fearsome noise.

'Umph—nerves—how old are you?"

I answered as a trembling slave might answer the questioning of an Eastern potentate.

Followed a deadly silence of half an hour. Then I happened to notice his cap, bearing the badge of the Royal Naval Air Service. Something must be done to break the tension. Here at any rate was a bond of sympathy. We were airmen. Perhaps if I asked him something about his particular type of machine. . . .

"I hear that your seaplanes won't climb, sir!" I said nervously.

I suppose it was a somewhat tactless remark, yet I was hardly prepared for the volcano of wrath which immediately burst forth from the other bed.

"And who the — told you that, you young — ; some — landlubber who——!"

I retired under the blankets while the storm

118 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

blew past. An hour later he spoke again in much softer tones.

"Umph—what's your temperature?"

"One hundred and four, sir!"

"Umph—better have this rug of mine!" and with that he came over and tucked me in as gently as a mother would do her babe.

Thus did I make the acquaintance of Commander B. commanding the Seaplane Squadron at Zanzibar. The first big task of this Squadron had been the location of the German cruiser *Königsberg*, which had made so inglorious a retirement up the Rufiji river. Flying in very antiquated machines and at heights rarely over 1000 feet, pilots and observers of the Royal Naval Air Service had carried out their task of ranging the big guns of the British monitors on to this ship, in a very daring and able manner. One aeroplane was brought down by the German shrapnel, and the pilot had a very lucky escape from drowning in the river. In spite of this the job was carried out, and the *Königsberg* sunk.

Since then, new and more modern seaplanes had been sent out, and these were now engaged chiefly on coast patrols, although on many

A Flight to the Rufiji. 119

occasions reconnaissances were carried out miles inland.

Commander B. had only recently arrived from Mesopotamia, and it was interesting to hear his views on the matter of bumps. In his opinion there was very little difference between that place and East Africa, but as his flying experience up till then had been confined to the coastal area, I respectfully suggested that he should make that Uluguru circular trip before deciding definitely. Personally, I found that the "bumps" on the coast were very mild indeed compared with those we met with on the highlands, and later on in the vicinity of Lake Nyassa.

CHAPTER XII.

KILWA AND THE TRAGEDY OF CLOWE.

AFTER ten days at the Convalescent Home I left for Daresalam, crossing in an Arab dhow. Arriving at Daresalam, I found that I had to leave on the next boat for Kilwa, and report on the aerodrome then under preparation at that place. At Kilwa Kissiwani, from which the road runs twenty miles northwards to Kilwa proper, a car was waiting for me, and within an hour I was at the aerodrome. Here I found Osman, a pilot who had only recently been sent out to the Squadron, and who had been placed in charge of the aerodrome construction gang. A very unfortunate site had been chosen, in low swampy ground which promised to become a lake after the first shower of rain. The aeroplanes were wanted too urgently, however, for us to change it at present, and speeding up

the niggers we managed to make it safe in a day or two: then wiring to Daresalam that all was ready, we patiently awaited the coming of the machines. The natives were all very excited at the prospect of seeing one of the "big birds" come to roost. They had occasionally seen aircraft of the R.N.A.S., and they knew quite a fair amount about bombs, but they could not quite understand where the human beings fitted in.

The whole populace rushed out of doors when a loud hum announced the approach of the first *ndege*. Thousands of eyes were strained eagerly to the sky, and deep gasps of astonishment were heard as the machine descended in a steep spiral, flattened out over the palm-trees, swooped down gently and kissed the ground as daintily as a butterfly alighting on a wisp of grass. It was Carey-Thomas, who was to take command of the Flight. The niggers pressed round and regarded him with awe and wonder written in their faces.

"Now's your time, Carey, if you want to set up as a local god—a burning-glass or seidlitz powder's not in it with this!"

But Carey's heart evidently yearned for more

122 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

substantial things, and we walked up to the Mess for refreshments.

Two other machines were to be expected at intervals of fifteen minutes, and I returned to the aerodrome in time to see the first one land safely. It was Jansen, and there still remained Clowe. A quarter of an hour passed and no sign came: in half an hour we began to feel worried, for the sun was sinking rapidly—and yet no familiar hum in the sky. We should have had a wire from Daresalam had he returned. When six o'clock struck we knew that he must have come down, for his petrol could only last $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and we resigned ourselves to the inevitable.

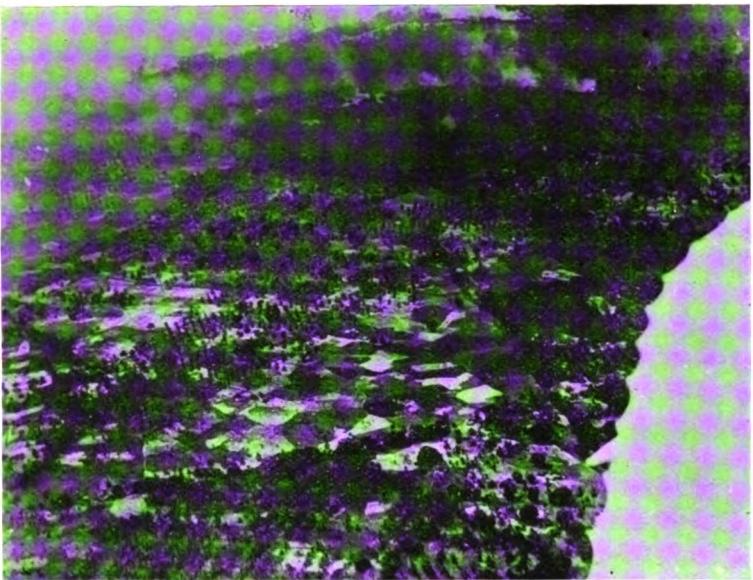
They say that war has made soldiers callous to the horrors of death. Perhaps this is true, but in a little Flight like ours, one could never really shake off that terrible feeling of despondency when one of the mess was "missing." Although experience had taught us that "missing" usually meant a few days wandering in the bush and a happy return to camp, yet there was always that disturbing sensation of uncertainty; and although at dinner that night we had all the outward appearances of being a moderately

cheerful party, I'll guarantee there was not one in whose mind thoughts of our comrade were not uppermost.

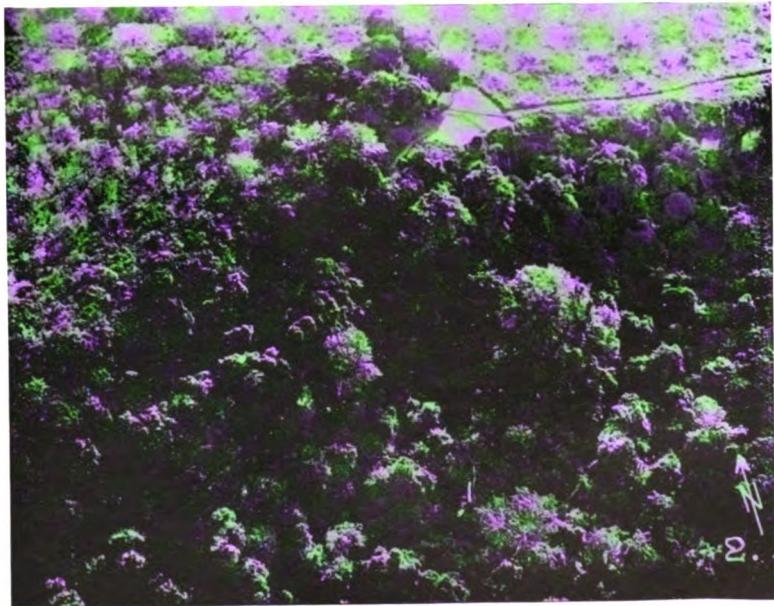
Late in the evening, orders came down from General Hoskins, who was now in command of the Kilwa force, that we were to attempt a reconnaissance as soon as possible over Kibata, a military post some forty miles north-west, in which our infantry at that time were more or less surrounded by a powerful force of the enemy. The map of this section was particularly inaccurate, and very little information could be given as to how we should find our way to the place. We were simply told that it was a big white fort on the top of a hill, and that several native roads converged upon it.

Carey-Thomas and I left at daybreak next morning. The wind was blowing from the sea, and we took off in the direction of the town, which we skimmed over at 200 feet. The quaint, flat-roofed, white Arab houses gleaming amongst the rich green foliage of the cocoanut palms made a thoroughly delightful picture. A broad yellow beach of sparkling sand, patched here and there with mangroves, divided the town from the sea, whose great monsoon rollers broke

on the shore in scintillating lines of foam. Sunken coral-reefs and green sea-gardens were revealed as through a magic mirror as we flew outward over the water. Soon we banked steeply and turned towards the land. Above the town the ground rises gently in a series of hills, covered with cocoanuts, native cultivation, and exquisitely-tinted mango-trees. Ten miles north the mighty silver coils of the Matandu river were discernible, and we set our course in that direction. Although the sun was shining brilliantly, heavy patches of cloud hung over the hills Kibata way, and soon we had to commence dodging. There is something very fascinating about cloud dodging. The way is blocked by a dense bank of cumulus; to fly through this is not dangerous but uncomfortable, and of course the ground may be hidden for many minutes—a fatal thing when one has to find one's way by tracing a narrow native path through the jungle. To climb above this cloud is perhaps possible, but obviously possesses no advantage: to fly below means being "bumped" in a most disagreeable manner. Therefore the only thing to do is to find a clear gap or "pass," and at this game we



Cocoanut plantations and native cultivations seen from the air.



Typical forest seen from the air.

quickly became expert. It was usually the observer's task to stand up from his seat, choose the way, and wave his hands to right or left as a guide to the pilot. Sometimes we would fly through wonderful cloud caves, ornamented with airy stalactites and stalagmites, or pass under frowning cliffs and over yawning chasms. It was all very nice on the homeward journey, when there was no need to worry about finding the way, but going out it kept us in a perpetual state of anxiety.

North of the Matandu the ground is clothed in dense forest, in which the road was frequently hidden for miles. A native path never by any chance runs straight, and it was a very difficult task to pick it up again after once losing it from sight. However, our luck was in, and at last we were overjoyed to get a glimpse of the little white fort, just before it was blotted out by an immense cloud. It was nearly ten minutes before we saw it again, and by that time we were well to the south of it. Bumps or no bumps, we had to come down, and pulling back the throttle Carey pushed the joy-stick forward. We were not much more than 1000 feet from the ground when the machine flattened out.

126 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

The country below was very mountainous and still forest clad. Several trench lines could be seen, but before attempting to sketch them I decided that we should first of all fly over the fort in order to get our bearings.

It was a typical "Boma," built of bricks and plaster, with dazzling white cement walls, and presenting from the air at any rate a very spick-and-span appearance. Part of it had been destroyed by the German artillery, which had done some very effective shooting. The slopes of the hill had been cleared of forest, and this open space was being shelled continuously. Immediately above the fort I gave the signal to Carey, and he commenced a steep turn: in the middle of it and without a moment's warning the engine suddenly stopped dead! Instinctively he put the nose of the machine down and we started to glide towards the ground. With no small amount of apprehension I looked towards the bare hill-side: as a landing-ground its attractiveness did not thrill me. Even if we did crash safely there was the Hun shell fire to consider. However, I put every confidence in the judgment of my pilot and resigned myself to the inevitable. It is a curious sensation, sitting in a comfortable

upholstered seat, feeling physically fit in every sense, yet knowing that within the space of perhaps a minute one may be a mangled corpse. It is not the sense of fear that is uppermost in one's mind by any means, and it is a mistake to imagine that all a man's sins float across his consciousness on occasions like these. The time is usually much too short.

As we came nearer to the ground the bumps became very violent indeed, and sometimes it was hard to keep in one's seat. I had loosened my belt—a wise precaution in case the machine was badly smashed up—and had curled my legs under my body in order to keep them out of the way of the engine should it be pushed forward. At 300 feet I closed my eyes and waited for the final crash. . . .

Hours and hours seemed to pass, . . . and then, instead of the sound of rending wood and fabric, came the very welcome splutter of the engine, complaining badly at first and then swelling out into its wonted roar. I looked round at Carey. He shouted gleefully, but his face still wore a look of anxiety. Slowly we climbed, but so low had we come that our way home was still barred by the hills. In five minutes, how-

ever, the altimeter was registering 1000 feet, with the engine still running perfectly. Naturally we turned homewards as soon as our height permitted, and for an hour we flew along over the forest expecting every minute that the engine would fail again. Apart from an occasional "miss," each of which sent my heart into my throat, it behaved splendidly, and at last we landed safely at the aerodrome. Climbing out of our seats we shook hands without saying a word, but there was a look in our eyes that meant much more than words could express.

Good news awaited us. Clowe had landed safely at Mikindani, close to the Portuguese border, and about 100 miles south of Kilwa. He had been unable to identify our aerodrome on his way down, and had simply pushed on until his petrol had finished. He would leave for Kilwa as soon as he received a supply of fuel which the Naval people were sending ashore, and we might expect him that evening.

The cause of our engine trouble was discovered to be a choking of the petrol intake to the carburettor. Nearly a thimbleful of a peculiar red mud was taken from the gauze filter, and the

Kilwa and the Tragedy of Clowe. 129

mechanics were very puzzled as to how it had got there, for the tanks and pipes had been thoroughly cleaned out several times before the flight. They would be carefully examined and recleaned before we ventured out again.

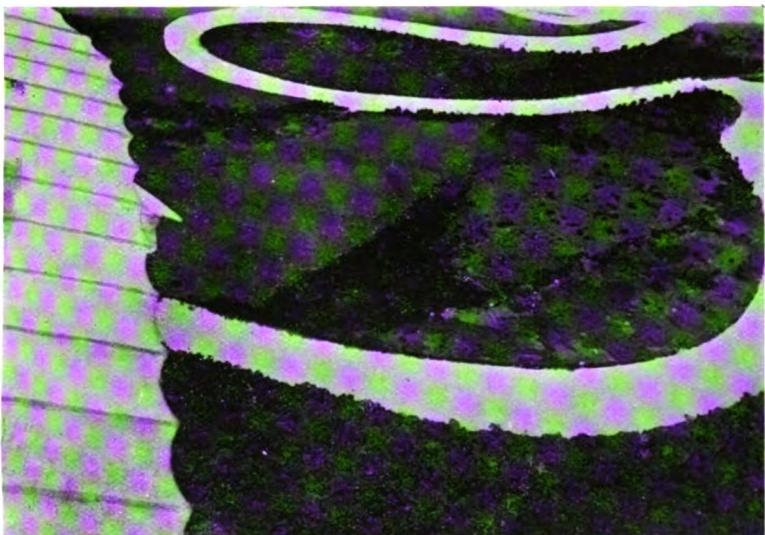
Kilwa Kivinje is a very picturesque old town, and once it was a very busy slaving port. It is inhabited chiefly by Swahili fishermen and farmers, but there are many pure Arabs and a few Indian traders. At this time of the year, a month before the heavy rains, it was particularly unhealthy ; and, although the thermometer rarely climbed higher than 98 degs. in the shade, the heat, on account of the moisture, was very trying. Fully 75 per cent of the mechanics were already down with malaria, and it was a difficult business to keep more than two machines in order. Throughout the campaign the work of our men had been magnificent. Most of them were South Africans, but this does not mean that they were in any way inured to the conditions of tropical Africa. On account of disease, the work of the men who were more or less fit was frequently doubled, and it was no unusual thing for one of them to put in twelve hours' continuous work on a defective engine or a

130 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

damaged machine, so that it could take the air in the shortest possible time.

About four in the afternoon a wireless message came to say that Clowe had left Mikindani for Kilwa. Big smoke fires were immediately prepared and a sharp look-out kept for his arrival. About five o'clock he was sighted, well out to sea, and evidently endeavouring to keep clear of the heavy storm-clouds that hung over the land. He disappeared in five minutes, and although very lights were sent up at intervals until dark, he was not seen nor heard again.

Early next morning, Osman, flying the machine we had used for Kibata, was sent up the coast to look for him. Three and a half hours later he returned with an exciting story. He had flown north to the mouth of the Rufiji, and there had encountered a very heavy storm that had blown him out to sea. Suddenly the engine stopped dead, even as it had done with us the day before, and he glided down through the torrential rain, expecting to crash into the water. At 500 feet, however, the air became clearer, and he discovered that he was over Mafia Island, where the R.N.A.S. had an aerodrome. Just as he was about to land the engine picked up again, and he decided to turn



A curious effect. Winding river seen from Aeroplane.



The winding Matandu river, near Kilwa, where Clowe landed.
Note mud-flats and mangrove swamps.

for Kilwa, as the way was now clear of cloud. He seemed remarkably pleased to be back. The peculiar red mud was found once more in the carburettor, but it was several days before the mystery of its origin was solved. It was due to a defective tank, the interior of which had not been properly treated to resist the corrosive action of the petrol; and this demonstrates how easy it is for a careless factory worker to cause the loss of a valuable aeroplane, and possibly the death of one or two people.

No sign of Clowe had been seen. Late in the afternoon Carey-Thomas suddenly became ill, and as a thermometer placed under his tongue gave a reading of 104 degs., much against his wish we packed him off to hospital. Next day a nigger arrived with a message from our lost friend. He had missed the aerodrome, and this time had landed just north of the Matandu river. Yesterday he had made a third attempt, but, encountering heavy rain, he had decided to return to the river and await a more favourable opportunity. We were overjoyed to see him the same afternoon, flying low along the coast-line, and loud cheers rent the air when he finally landed on the aerodrome.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY FATHER CHRISTMAS.

ON the following morning Clowe and I left together for Kibata, and as there were fewer clouds than usual we experienced little difficulty in finding the way. Flying low, we carefully examined the various German positions, and made a rough sketch-map of the area within a two-mile radius of the fort. On the return journey we struck out first of all for the coast. This route had the advantage of being more interesting, and also of being more safe in case of engine trouble. It would have been an easy matter to land on the beach, where help would have been forthcoming from the numerous natives. How wonderful it was to gaze down through the air and then through the sea at the sunken white coral-reefs and sea-gardens many fathoms below. So clear was the water

that the tiny little native fishing-craft seemed to be hovering in the air. The sea and the white beach sparkled at a million glittering points, and even the dark olive of the land seemed drenched with champagne. There is something in this powerful tropical sun-bath that infects one's blood, and its effect in an aeroplane where the unpleasant warmth is not experienced is most exhilarating.

We flew immediately over the mouth of the Matandu river, and for several miles out from the coast we could see the extensive submarine sandbanks that its waters are slowly depositing. With my glasses, here and there in the river itself, I could make out groups of hippopotami and occasionally crocodiles. The Germans had declared the Matandu river a hippo reserve, and so numerous were these formidable monsters, that when we came to use the river for transport purposes several of our supply boats were attacked and sunk, affording another striking proof of Germany's wonderful military forethought.

At dinner the same evening Osman staggered the company with the announcement that the day after next would be Christmas. The

mathematical process by which he had arrived at this profound discovery was not at first obvious, but later we learnt that since his arrival at Kilwa he had kept a tree calendar, Robinson-Crusoe fashion. Lest perchance he should have registered two notches for the day of his adventure over Mafia Island, we called in the orderly-room clerk, who after some hesitation agreed that the date must be the 23rd of December.

The prospect was a tragic one. There had been no supplies in for weeks, there was not a drop of liquor in the place, and we had long since abandoned all hope of ever seeing a mail again.

That night we dreamt of roast turkey, Christmas pudding, iced champagne and port, but the dawn of day brought no solution to our soul-depressing problem. Our spirits rose somewhat in the afternoon, however, when the faithful Maganga returned from a nature ramble with two fine geese, for which he said he had paid the sum of 12 rupees. By this time I knew Maganga pretty well, and immediately I had a mental picture of some poor nigger searching his fowl-house in vain for the geese that would never return.

Just as we sat down to tea, Grant, our very able and untiring Flight-Sergeant, came in to say that an aeroplane had been sighted making this way, and as we rushed out of the mess a wire arrived, "Machine left Daresalam for yours 15 hours." Before we reached the aerodrome it had landed, and we soon identified in the pilot's seat the Old 'Un, wearing a very wide grin on his face.

"Merry Christmas, lads!" he shouted as he got out; "see what Father Christmas has brought you!" We lost no time in climbing up to the observer's cockpit, which we found to be crammed full with mysterious-looking cases and parcels. Never did aeroplane carry a more heavenly cargo. There was a huge mail, Christmas puddings, mince-pies, *pâté-de-foie-gras*, whisky, sherry, port, and a whole case of priceless champagne of the Old 'Un's own choosing. The Old 'Un, it appeared, had come down to take command of the Flight in the absence of Carey-Thomas (who had been sent down to South Africa), and a few minutes later we were celebrating his appointment in a most suitable manner.

Opening the mail was a thrilling operation,

136 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

and ripping open the travel-stained envelopes and sorting their contents into chronological order a joyous experience. It was now two months since I had heard from England, and even the bills were good reading. Amongst the parcels was a box of nearly 6000 cigarettes sent out by the 'Daily Sketch' for distribution amongst the troops. As there was no present shortage of tobacco, we decided to reserve these in case we might meet some one whose need was greater than ours.

Whether it was the smell of the champagne or not I cannot say, but immediately after our Christmas luncheon I was seized with a very bright idea, which I promptly propounded to the Old 'Un. Why shouldn't we put the parcel of cigarettes into a sandbag, fly out to Kibata, and drop them on our gallant little garrison, who for the last two months had been having a perfect hell of a time? The rain had cut them off from all supplies, the Hun had shelled them without remission, and there could be no doubt as to the acceptability of the tobacco. The Old 'Un was enthusiastic, and orders were sent down to the hangars to have a machine ready by 3.30 P.M. The weather did not look

too promising, but the rain rarely came on seriously until after sundown. A sandbag was procured, a short and seasonable note scribbled, and the cigarettes and all the latest papers (the latest being October) pushed in and sewn up.

We left the ground at 3.45, and in spite of the clouds and heavy rainstorms, sighted the fort by 5 P.M. There was no time to lose, and in order to make certain that the bag fell in the British trenches and not the German, the Old 'Un commenced to volplane down. Thoughts of my first experience over this place rushed to my mind as the fort came nearer and nearer.

We were not more than 400 feet from the ground and 200 yards from the fort when the Old 'Un shouted for the bag which I was carrying. Swinging it clear of the fuselage, he let go, and we watched it sink swiftly earthwards, the momentum taking it with unerring accuracy towards the little white building. We could see our people standing out of their trenches and waving their hands, and then suddenly run helter-skelter for cover as they caught sight of the bag falling rapidly through the air; evidently they thought that we were bombing

138 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

them. They soon discovered their mistake, however, and as we turned for home we could see them enthusiastically waving their appreciation of Father Christmas in his latest disguise. On the way back the Old 'Un broke the monotony by indulging in numerous stunts, and I began to wish that I had not partaken of such an excellent lunch. Things have a habit of coming back to one on occasions like these.

Maganga had built, under my directions, a little grass hut. To make it water-tight I had placed on the roof the fly of an old tent. I know of nothing more cheerful than to lie on a nice soft bed and watch the lightning playing across the heavens, to hear the crash of thunder and the pelting of the rain on the ground, and to feel absolutely impervious to it all. That was how I felt that night when, clad only in silk pyjamas, I sank on to the luxurious softness of my bed and tucked in my mosquito-net.

The rain soon commenced, and I could hear the big drops spattering on the roof. The lightning became more vivid and blue, and the thunder louder and louder. By 12.30 A.M. the whole raging elements were let loose, and the noise of the storm was terrific. I smiled glee-

fully as I thought of the less provident members of the Flight, whose wicked swear-words were now outvying the storm in fury. Again I congratulated myself—and then suddenly it happened: a column of icy-cold water burst forth from the darkness above my head, and fell with a horrible gurgling noise on to my thinly-clad chest. Leaping out of bed, I simply shrieked in terror as I placed my foot on an enormous lizard that had crawled in for shelter. Feverishly feeling for my boots, I put my hand on something wet and clammy, which must have been a frog; at any rate, it was too much for me, and I rushed out into the storm without waiting to dress further. The rain was coming down in solid sheets, and the lightning illuminated the camp in a most terrifying manner. In my bare feet I staggered across to the mess, which, possessing a canvas awning, was moderately dry; here I found the remainder of the Flight picking the bones of the geese and drinking whisky-and-rain. We spent a cheerful night together. Next morning we found that the aerodrome had become a lake, as I had anticipated, and it was decided to set to work immediately and clear a space on the

140 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

hillside. It was also decided to move our quarters into a large Arab house in the town, which was now available owing to the departure of some unit for the front. Flying would be *verboten* for some days at least, and we spent the time making the house as comfortable as possible. I managed to make a trip down to Kilwa Kissiwani, where I explored the island with its interesting Persian, Arabic, and Portuguese archaeological remains. Presumably Kilwa was known to the ancients, for coins and pottery of great antiquity have been found here.

The most important personage in the Kilwa district is an old Arab gentleman known as the Liwale, and although in his younger days he enjoyed an unenviable reputation as a slaver, to-day his attitude towards mankind is most benign. Because of the immense political influence that he wields, the British Authorities were anxious at that time to keep very much on the right side of him, and he was treated with great respect. He lived with his several wives in a large house on the outskirts of the town. Included in a draft of soldiers recently sent out from home were a number of ex-Metropolitan policemen: and one of these had

been attached to the local A.P.M.'s staff for military police duties. The story goes that one night this man was walking his beat quite close to the Liwale's house, when suddenly he heard a woman's shrieks. Quickly his mind flew back to familiar and similar happenings down the Whitechapel Road, and without bothering to knock he rushed into the house, to find the Liwale engaged in the very ordinary Eastern practice of beating one of his wives. Very much to the dear old gentleman's surprise and disgust, he was promptly collared by the scruff of the neck and frog-marched off to the Boma. It was far too late to wake the A.P.M., so without ceremony he was thrown into a nasty unclean cell and left to ponder over the strange ways of the white man until daybreak. What the A.P.M. said when he discovered the identity of his prisoner is unrecorded history.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RUFIFI REVISITED.

As soon as the new aerodrome was ready the machines were wheeled up, and flying commenced once more. The Kibata garrison was reinforced a few days after Christmas, and the Germans slowly retired towards the Rufiji, abandoning most of their artillery on the way. Clowe and I on one occasion had the good fortune to discover a number of Huns trying to rescue one of their big 4·1's which had slipped over the edge of the road into a swamp. We had only one bomb, but Clowe dropped it with such good effect that the porters and cattle harnessed to the gun stampeded, and fled terror-stricken into the forest. This gun was found later by our infantry. Our reconnaissances now became much longer, and took us frequently as far north as the Rufiji. The whole of the country over which we had

to fly was mountainous, and clad in impenetrable bush or forest. I usually flew with the Old 'Un on these occasions, and we had many thrilling experiences. Once when we were immediately over Utete, one of the largest German camps on the river, an exhaust valve snapped. The vibration was so terrific that we prepared to land in an open space quite near to the camp, but my pilot had such an intense abhorrence of Hun prisons (he had had six months in Germany before he escaped) that he decided to push on and risk having to crash in the mountains. As a matter of fact we got back quite safely, but the mechanics found two cylinders seized up when they came to examine the engine.

In order that we might extend the range of our reconnaissances farther west it was decided to make an aerodrome at Tscheremo, a village nearly 40 miles up the Matandu river. The Old 'Un and I went out by car, selected a fairly good site, and left Sergeant Smith to prepare it. One morning a few days after, we packed our blankets into the machine and said farewell to the Flight for a few days. We had no difficulty in locating the new aerodrome, but on landing we found it very small, and the ground

144 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

so soft and sandy that there seemed to be much doubt as to whether the machine would be able to get off the ground in sufficient time to clear the tall trees that fringed the open space. However, the reconnaissance was important, and we decided to risk it. That afternoon we climbed into our seats, Sergeant Smith swung the propeller, and a number of niggers held on to the planes and tail until the engine was running full out; then at a signal they let go and we started to move slowly—horribly slowly—forward. Gradually, however, our speed increased, and at last the wheels left the ground, but not until we had practically reached the extremity of the aerodrome. The trees were not 50 yards away, their topmost branches high above our heads, and there was no gap between them through which we might pass. It was too late to turn back, and my heart came into my mouth as the machine suddenly shot upwards in a mighty *zoom*, leapt clean over a tall mango tree, the wheels actually clipping off several thin branches, and dived again just on the point of stalling. Luckily for us the forest was not continuous; beyond the trees was an open glade through which we flew until the machine had gathered sufficient

speed to climb slowly into the free air. A bouquet of mango leaves still clung affectionately to the under-carriage, and we gasped with relief as we realised what a narrow squeak it had been.

We now turned north-west, taking a bee-line for Kitandi, a large village lying to the west of the Kibata Mountains, and occupied by our own troops. Half-way there we saw a magnificent bull sable antelope standing in the forest. The sight made us gnash our teeth with envy, for sable is one of the most greatly sought after of the East African antelopes. It watched us with a most bewildered air and did not attempt to move. Elephant tracks ran in all directions, and it was quite easy to see what damage they do even to the largest trees, many of which were torn down.

From Kitandi a narrow track runs westward towards Mahenge (then the German Headquarters), and with difficulty we followed this through the almost impenetrable bush for nearly thirty miles without seeing any sign of the enemy. Eventually we turned back in disgust; negative information frequently is more useful to the Staff than positive information, but the collecting of it is a very uninteresting task for the observer. The Old 'Un seemed very fed-up, and I was not at

146 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

all surprised to see him now turn the machine in the direction of Utete on the Rufiji river. We reached this in due course and found the whole camp ablaze. The Huns were evidently retiring, and they had set fire to their vast stores of flour and rice lest we should seize them. The view over the river was very fine; swollen with recent rains, it looked quite different from the Rufiji I had seen last November on my trip with Albu from Tulo. The Old 'Un had long since decided not to risk another landing at Tscheremo, and after I had completed my notes we turned for Kilwa, which we reached without further adventure as dusk was falling.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TOLL OF THE TROPICS.

THE rains were now becoming heavier and more frequent, and the toll in sickness increased accordingly. Many of us, too, were suffering from prickly heat, a diabolical form of irritant rash that attacks one's back and the most inaccessible regions of one's anatomy. There was no cure for it, apparently, except a change of climate, and the only way to obtain temporary relief was to lie on one's bed while Maganga operated with Talcum powder. Before long the Old 'Un, Clowe, and myself were the only officers left in the Flight, and as conditions were very much the same in the other Flights, the Squadron could hold out no promise of reinforcements.

One extra pilot, Botterel, arrived eventually. He had not previously flown in East Africa, and at the first opportunity I went out with

148 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

him to give him his bearings. One always felt very superior to people who had just come out, although this man had flown for a year on the Western Front. I was therefore anxious that we should have a successful reconnaissance. We had.

After dodging the most terrific thunderstorms for nearly an hour, I spotted the enemy camp many miles west of Tscheremo, of which the Staff desired to have a sketch. The trench line was particularly clear, and I was surprised to notice the askaris working away upon it quite unperturbed by our presence. Unluckily (?) we had no bombs, or perhaps we might have disturbed their tranquillity of mind somewhat. At the end of ten minutes I congratulated myself on having made a decent map, and feeling very satisfied I gave the signal to make for home. Five minutes later, when I examined my official map with the usual liberal allowance for inaccuracies, it suddenly dawned on me with a cold shudder that the camp I had reconnoitred successfully was one of our own. I felt myself blushing with shame, and the fact that it would have been impossible on account of the clouds to have proceeded farther was no consolation at all.

For the next few days the rain put an effective stop to all flying operations. The heat and the mosquitoes became worse and worse. There was not a man in the Flight who was not down with malaria for at least three days in each week. Flight-Sergeant Grant did the work of half a dozen men, and A.-M. Miles,¹ in charge of photography, had to carry out the duties of engineman, rigger, sailmaker, and cook, in addition to his own work. Sergeant Smith was still in charge of the aerodrome at Tscheremo, and there he was likely to remain for some time, as all road transport had broken down. The difficulties of carrying on the campaign under such conditions may well be imagined. News filtered through that the Germans had been driven from the Mgeta river down to the Rufiji, and that our troops had actually crossed the latter. But it soon became patent to us all that General Smuts's Great Push, from which we had all expected so much, had failed. The German Army was still intact; compared with ourselves they were in a favourable position. Their latest re-

¹ Miles was one of the few who had carried on without break from the arrival of the Squadron. It was entirely due to his grit and skill that we were able to take any photographs at all.

tirement had merely meant the shortening of their lines of communication, with no corresponding shortening of our own front. It was now too late to organise a fresh offensive, and it was doubtful if we could make good our recent territorial gains, for in another fortnight the whole of the unhealthy Rufiji valley would be flooded.

One day Mossop arrived by air from Tulo, a very creditable piece of cross-country flying. He had come for General Hoskins, who was now to take over the command of the Expeditionary Force from General Smuts. They left the next morning, and we were very relieved to hear by wire of their safe arrival a few hours later.

General Hoskins, like most of the other British Generals, from the first had been very enthusiastic about aeroplanes, and there can be no doubt that had he had his way we should have been able to carry out operations on a far grander and more successful scale. The task which lay before him now was a hopeless one. Without big reinforcements to replace the recent heavy casualties in the Rufiji valley, it was doubtful if we should be able to hold on to our gains. Men were dying

like flies from malaria and dysentery, transport had broken down, and the hospital accommodation was far from being adequate. And this was only the beginning of the heaviest and longest rainy season East Africa had experienced for over twenty years!

Owing to the intense heat the aerodrome was about as far as one could walk in moderate comfort, and even when clad in the flimsiest attire one always returned wet through with perspiration. Never by any chance was your skin dry day or night, and the enervating effect of these conditions may be imagined.

At last the dreaded symptoms of malaria made their appearance. Without a moment's notice, immediately after lunch one day, I commenced to shiver. A strong tot of whisky, a hot-water bottle, and six blankets made no difference at all, until late in the afternoon when the reaction set in, and then I seemed to melt. When my temperature reached 105° I thought that I'd better get down to hospital, and that's where I woke up two days later. Malaria, at any rate, helps you to forget your other troubles.

At the end of the week I was vastly surprised

152 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

to see the Old 'Un himself stagger into the ward, for he had sworn a mighty oath that he would never get fever. However, he did not stay longer than a couple of days, and he was soon busy flying again.

Personally I was feeling very played out, and was not exceedingly grieved when I was told that I should be transferred to Daresalam. I shall never forget that journey in a Ford ambulance to Kilwa Kissiwani. There was one other patient, Captain G—— of the K.A.R., suffering from malaria and dysentery, and the terrific jolting of the car on the bumpy road caused him dreadful agonies. Poor chap, he died in the next cot to my own the first night out at sea. Just before noon the ship's engines were stopped, and his emaciated body, sewn in a sailor's hammock, was dropped into the clear blue depths of the Indian Ocean. He had been fighting since the beginning of the war in Flanders, as well as East Africa, and it was hard to think that he should die like that. I heard the "Last Post" sound on the deck above, and I thought of that terse sad message already speeding its way home to England—

"Died—on active service!"

The engines started again, and the work of the ship and the medical staff went on as before. A nurse was smiling as she dressed an officer's wounds; in the next ward a gramophone commenced a selection from the latest musical comedy; through an open port-hole I could see the little blue waves dancing in the sunshine, and never before had I felt such a conscientious objection to war.

Two days later we arrived at Daresalam, and I was carried immediately into the base hospital.

CHAPTER XVI.

THROUGH THE RUAHA FLOODS.

ON my discharge from the base hospital at Daresalam I was ordered by the Squadron to report to the officer in charge of A-Flight at Iringa, a "late" German military post in the highlands, some 250 miles in from the coast. Two days later I arrived by rail at Dodoma, whence the road ran almost due south to my destination.

Here my troubles commenced. We were now in the height of the heaviest rainy season East Africa had experienced for nearly thirty years. A month or two ago the journey to Iringa might have been made by motor in two days, but the rains had turned the road into an excellent imitation of a canal, and the Ruaha river, which it crosses by means of a wooden bridge, was swollen to such an extent that it

had overflowed its banks and flooded the adjacent country for many miles. The depth and area of these floods was increasing hourly, and it was the opinion of the local natives that all communication with Iringa would cease within the next week. People returning from Iringa were even more pessimistic : they said that they had waded through floods in places up to five feet in depth for nearly twelve miles, and the Ruaha bridge, already badly damaged, was expected to carry away completely at any moment. Safaris were still getting through, it was true, but many porters had been drowned, and only the fact that our troops ahead were very short of rations had justified the action of the Supply Department in sending off more convoys. Motor transport, they said, was impracticable from a point twenty miles south of Dodoma ; but as the malaria had left me too weak to attempt the whole march on foot, I determined to travel as far as I possibly could by means of the two Ford light lorries which the Squadron had placed at my disposal.

These cars had already seen considerable service, and I ordered the drivers to overhaul them thoroughly, and to draw from the M. T.

156 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

stores what "spares" they deemed necessary for such a rough journey.

We left Dodoma early one morning with the sun shining down brightly from an azure sky. For the first forty miles the going was not at all bad, for the ground was well drained and, apart from one or two patches of sand, the surface was excellent. Our first trouble, as a matter of fact, was due not to meteorological conditions, but to a very sick carburettor. Luckily we were all philosophers, and we made the best of things, while the two mechanics hammered away with their spanners. Maganga lit a fire and put the dicksee on, while I strolled into the bush with my shot-gun. The long grass was literally alive with quail, and in fifteen minutes I managed to bag two brace. Before they were cold Maganga split them in two and roasted them over the fire on sticks. With a couple of baked potatoes and a pint of freshly-brewed tea they afforded me one of the most delectable meals it has ever been my lot to enjoy.

At last the carburettor was fixed up and we took the road once more. We soon realised that our friends had not exaggerated, for the

track developed into a series of deep mud-puddles in which the wheels frequently sank up to the axles. Every hundred yards or so one of the cars would stick, and then Maganga and I would have to get out and push. It was exasperating work. The sun seemed to shine with increasing fierceness, and as the road was hemmed in with thick bush, there was no breeze to cool the air or blow away the clouds of flies that swarmed round us. We passed dozens of stranded cars, one with only its hood visible above a particularly evil-looking stretch of swamp. The Ford, apparently, was the only car capable of movement. Every one we passed seemed to laugh at the idea of my pushing on to Iringa: there was no hope of my getting through the floods, they said, and I should be a fool if I did not turn back while I had a car that would carry me.

About four o'clock an ominous rumbling warned us that the daily storm would soon arrive. The sun was still shining, but a bank of dense black cloud already occupied one half of the sky, and it was rapidly spreading. At the first patch of rising ground I called a halt, and we prepared ourselves for the rain which

experience had taught me would be on us within a few minutes. My own tent was quickly pitched, and a large canvas sheet stretched between the two cars (placed close together) to give protection to the men. Hardly had we secured it than the first big drops began to fall. Then came the wind, howling and shrieking through the trees, and threatening to blow our canvas shelter clean away. Like grim death we hung on to the sheet, until the gale subsided just as mysteriously as it began. By this time the whole sky was hung with leaden nimbus, and the hills Dodoma way were hidden in a swirl of rain. The lightning was magnificent—spasmodic at first, then developing into an almost continuous ultra-violet discharge, while the thunder roared and crashed louder than the big guns on the Western front. Between the heaviest claps we could hear the rain approaching like the noise of Atlantic rollers breaking on a rocky coast. On the slopes of a hill a quarter of a mile away we could see it beating itself into spray; then, with a roar, it was on us. It fell not in drops but in a sheet, and in five minutes the whole veldt as far as one could see was changed into

a lake. Fortunately my tent was rainproof, but the water burst in under the flaps, and soon my bed was standing in a pool several inches deep. Maganga sat and shivered in a box alongside me.

"Are we going to be drowned?" I inquired.

"Shauri-ya-Munguu" (It is the affair of Allah), he replied, with the African's philosophy.

For an hour the storm raged without intermission, and then it suddenly ceased. Stepping outside, I saw the thunder-clouds were being rolled away to the south like a mighty featherbed, painted in fiery colours by the sun's dying rays. The air smelt clean, fresh, and exhilarating. It was hopeless to attempt to push on farther, and I decided that we should camp here for the night. Before the coming of the storm Maganga had taken the very wise precaution of collecting a bundle of firewood and placing it inside the tent, and he had little difficulty in making his fire. My tent had been pitched under a tall leafy acacia, and a few minutes after dusk, with a great fluttering of wings, a flock of guinea-fowl alighted on the topmost branches. This was beneficent Providence with a vengeance! Taking my shot-gun, I crept

underneath the tree and had little difficulty in spotting several large black objects silhouetted against the starlit sky. Moving until I had two of them in line, I fired, and they fell with a thud to the ground, while the remainder flew away with a great commotion. Maganga began to clean them at once, and suddenly he announced with glee the discovery of a perfect egg in each. Evidently this was the nesting season. We had one guinea-fowl stewed for supper, and although it was not so tough as might have been expected, I believe that it was more responsible for the restless night that followed than the lion that insisted in roaring at irregular intervals a few hundred yards away. The eggs, however, made an excellent breakfast next morning.

The going now became even worse, for although the veldt was comparatively dry, the road was an almost continuous stretch of liquid mud. So long as the surface underneath was fairly hard this did not make much difference, for the cars dashed along like motor-boats, sending up great plumes of water, and leaving behind a turbid and foaming wake. Soon, however, we encountered cotton soil, consisting

of a sticky, greasy black clay on which nothing can grip. Then it was a case of pushing the cars along, and with the sun beating mercilessly on our sweating bodies, and clouds of nasty wet-footed flies buzzing round our mouths and eyes, the state of our minds may be imagined. There were times when I nearly wept from sheer exasperation. However, late in the afternoon we reached Humbwa, a small supply camp, where we were able to replenish our store of petrol and replace a broken spring. The officer in charge said there was just a chance of my getting through to Kisego, and as there was still no sign of rain I decided to push on. Four miles from Humbwa we struck more cotton soil, and the drivers were so tired and generally "fed-up" that I decided to camp here. It was just as well that I did, for the storm came on fiercer and more suddenly than the day before. The thunder shook the very ground, and the rain fell so heavily that I began to think we should have to climb trees to save ourselves from drowning. It blew over in an hour, however, and when we turned-in the stars were shining as serenely as ever. During the night another storm came on, and one glance at the road next morning was

162 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

sufficient to decide me to abandon the idea of reaching Kisego with the cars. After the stores were off-loaded I ordered the two drivers to return to Dodoma, and gave them a note to the nearest porter camp asking the O.C. to send me a dozen carriers as quickly as possible. There was small hope of the porters arriving before evening, so, leaving Maganga in charge, I set off into the bush with my shot-gun.

The country in this part of East Africa consists chiefly of what is known as open bush. In the rainy season the grass is fairly thick and provides excellent cover for game. Guinea-fowl, spare-fowl, quail, and sand-grouse abounded, but I concerned myself chiefly with the duck and the teal, numbers of which flew continuously overhead. By lunch-time I had bagged two very large spur-winged geese, six brace of duck, four and a half brace of teal, a brace of guinea-fowl, and a greater bustard or paa, the size of Christmas-fed turkey. I piled them together under a tree and, marking the place, returned to the camp. Maganga had been very industrious during my absence. He had repitched the little tent, and with the assistance of a native boy from an adjacent village, had collected suff-

cient dry wood to last us several days. Taking this boy with me, I set out into the bush once more to retrieve my bag, which I had little difficulty in locating. On the return journey I was thrilled to see a small herd of impala browsing in a grassy glade about half a mile away. Luckily I had brought my rifle, and telling the boy to remain where he was, I commenced to stalk them. The only possible way to get near was to creep along through a very dense mass of thorn to my left, and nearly half an hour had passed before I was within decent range. The herd was now only two hundred yards away, and already they showed signs of nervousness. Selecting the biggest ram, I was just preparing to fire, when suddenly a terrific roar in the bushes immediately to my rear made my heart leap into my mouth. I could feel my hair bristling like the mane of an angry dog, and, gripping my rifle with trembling fingers, I turned round to meet the expected attack. Fortunately for me it did not come, and after waiting a few minutes my terror subsided and I crept gingerly forward to explore. *Twenty-five yards from where I had been lying I found the spoor of what must have*

been a very large lion. Evidently he had been stalking the impala himself, and the roar was an indication of his rage at having his sport spoilt by an interfering white man. The antelope had of course bolted—His Royal Highness, doubtless, in hot pursuit.

Early next morning our transport arrived—not porters as we expected, but six donkeys in charge of a similar number of natives. Although nobly they lived up to the traditions of their kind so far as sudden inexplicable halts were concerned, these donkeys proved to be infinitely less exasperating than the cars, and about 3 P.M. we arrived, without mishap, at Kisego, a small store camp that had been built on the north bank of the Kisego river at the ferry. This ferry consisted of a double pontoon, running by means of pulleys along a stout wire rope stretched across the water. In the swiftly-running current the sides of these pontoons acted as hydroplanes, and they crossed from bank to bank automatically. We camped on the north bank and crossed early on the following morning. Here we transferred our luggage to a couple of Maxwell light cars, and the journey to Temagwe was made in a couple of hours. At Temagwe the floods com-

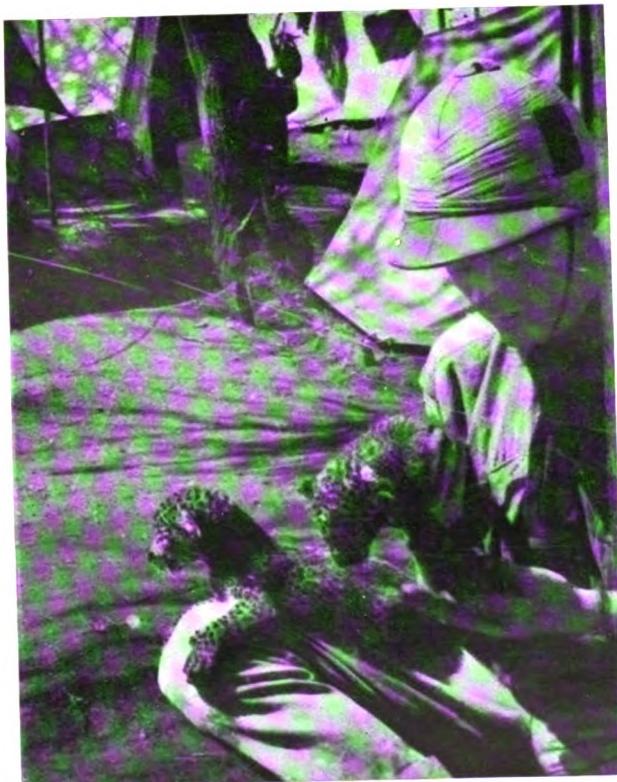
menced, and as it was hopeless to try and get through in four hours, I decided to stay here for the night. I dined with the Supply Officer, who cheered me considerably by offering to lend me his life-belt for the journey! He also told me that he had received instructions to see that all white troops entering the swamps were wearing metal identity discs, as these could usually be recovered from the crocodiles by *post mortem*! Needless to say his nationality was Scotch, and, true son of Caledonia that he was, he finished off my last bottle of whisky in magnificent style. He took it neat, for he maintained that he had absorbed enough water into his system during the last few weeks to dilute all the whisky it would ever be his lot to drink. Unfortunately, like many of his countrymen, he was melancholy in his cups, and when, after reciting lengthy passages from Robbie Burns and Holy Writ in a dour monotonous voice, he commenced to preach me a sermon on the Flood, I thought it best to leave him.

At daybreak next morning I was ready to start. Fourteen porters had been allotted to me, and as they would desert at the first opportunity, I was warned to keep a close watch

on them. News had just come through that the floods had not risen appreciably during the night, but it was feared that the bridge would carry away before evening. Already the water was lapping over the top of it. It promised to be an exciting race. If the bridge did go, the only alternative route to Iringa was *via* Dodoma, Daresalam, Durban, Beira, the Zambesi, Nyassaland, and Lake Nyassa—a journey which would take six weeks at least, even if ship sailings were favourable. No; I was going to get across the Ruaha even if I had to swim for it, and after haranguing the porters for a minute or two, telling them that I would shoot the first who tried to desert, I started. Ten minutes' march brought us to the water's edge. From the spectacular point of view it was the most disappointing flood I had ever seen, because as the whole country was covered in dense bush, one could only see the water immediately adjacent to the road. The motor road, of course, was marked by a deep canal, and through this we had to walk. Soon the water was up to our waists, and progress became very slow and tiring. The porters carried their loads on their heads, and they felt their way along the slippery



The Author's Safari crossing the famous Ruaha bridge.



A pair of baby leopards that became the Squadron mascot.

bed of the "canal" by means of long sticks carried in their one free hand. I have never felt so sorry for human beings in my life as I did for them. The negro's foot is very tough and hard, and is a natural protection against the wicked thorns that are scattered over the East African veldt like pebbles on a beach. The water, however, quickly softened their feet and made them as pervious to the thorns as bacon fat. No wonder the poor wretches wanted to desert! There was no wind and the heat was intolerable: clouds of filthy flies attacked their eyes and nostrils, and with both hands engaged it was impossible to brush them away. A large food convoy had left a few minutes before us, and as we were travelling faster we had to pass their porters one by one. Most of them were recruited from the Tabora district, and they came of a disease-stricken and degenerate tribe. Many were already half-dead with malaria and dysentery. They were being driven along like sheep by a white man and half a dozen native police, but although I heard much bad language and many terrible threats, I did not see a single porter thrashed or even touched. I wonder what would have been their lot if

168 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

they had been rushing up food to the German Army instead of the British !

My own boys behaved splendidly, but I gave them no chance to do otherwise. Maganga led the van, and it was intensely amusing to see how he attempted to keep his dignity when pushing through the particularly slippery places. Once his feet slipped from under him, and for a second or so he completely disappeared underneath the stenching brown water. The porters howled with delight, but Maganga had a pretty revenge an hour or so later. The black man, of course, has an intense fear of crocodiles, and although these animals rarely attack when there is any noise or commotion, there was always the remote chance of finding one in such a place as this. We had with the convoy a young Nyassa boy who, after being taken prisoner by the Germans, had escaped and was now working his passage back to his native country. He was a magnificent swimmer, and the floods presented no difficulty to him at all—he swam the whole way. We were negotiating a particularly deep part of the road, when suddenly this boy, evidently at Maganga's instigation, dived and swam along under the water for several yards: then

suddenly, without rising to the surface, he made a fierce grab at a porter's legs. With a ghastly shriek of terror the man dropped his load and collapsed with a mighty splash.

"Mamba! Mamba!"¹ cried the rest, and in less time than it takes to tell, the whole safari downed loads and made off into the bush as fast as their legs would carry them. It took me half an hour to restore their courage, but when I explained the true cause of their alarm I was surprised to find that they appreciated the joke immensely. Personally, I did not, and neither did the perpetrator of it when I caught him a few minutes later. That half-hour might make all the difference to my getting over the river, and besides, my own blankets had been among the loads dropped so precipitately into the water.

At midday I halted for half an hour, while the boys were allowed to rest, their loads being placed temporarily in the forks of adjacent acacias. All this time the scenery had not changed at all: the road was hemmed in with dense bush, and the everlasting monotony of it got on my nerves. The heat and the state of the roads were growing gradually worse, but so

¹ Crocodile.

far we had not received particularly bad news from the bridge. Soon after we started again I began to feel shivery : my eyes and back commenced to ache, and I realised that I was in for a sharp attack of fever. The bridge was still three miles ahead : with luck we would reach it about four o'clock.

The food porters were now suffering terribly. I saw one of them, staggering along with a load of flour on his head, suddenly pitch forward with an awful moan and disappear. They pulled him out, but he was too weak to stand, and a native policeman was left behind to look after him. I could almost hear the ghastly old vulture which had flown over our heads for the last hour or so chortling with glee. He alighted in a tall baobab tree a hundred yards away and was quickly joined by half a dozen more. I do not think they were disappointed, for the policeman joined the convoy an hour later. Although I had taken ten grains of aspirin, my head and limbs ached more than ever, and in spite of the grilling sunshine I would have sold my soul for half a dozen blankets and a hot-water bottle. I wanted to lie down, but the sight of those hideous birds and the undoubted fate of the unfor-

tunate porter haunted my mind. As the grip of the fever became stronger, however, I even began to envy the man; after all, he was at rest—and that counted above everything. Yes, that was much better. I would sit down now—why not? And then I felt Maganga's strong black arm round my waist.

"Master," I heard a queer distant voice saying, "the bridge very near, man say it finish very soon, river growing very big."

The bridge? Why, I was out to fight that bridge. "Finish very soon." I'd jolly well show it! I became possessed with some mad demon. Drawing my revolver, I fired a couple of shots into the air and then bawled to the porters.

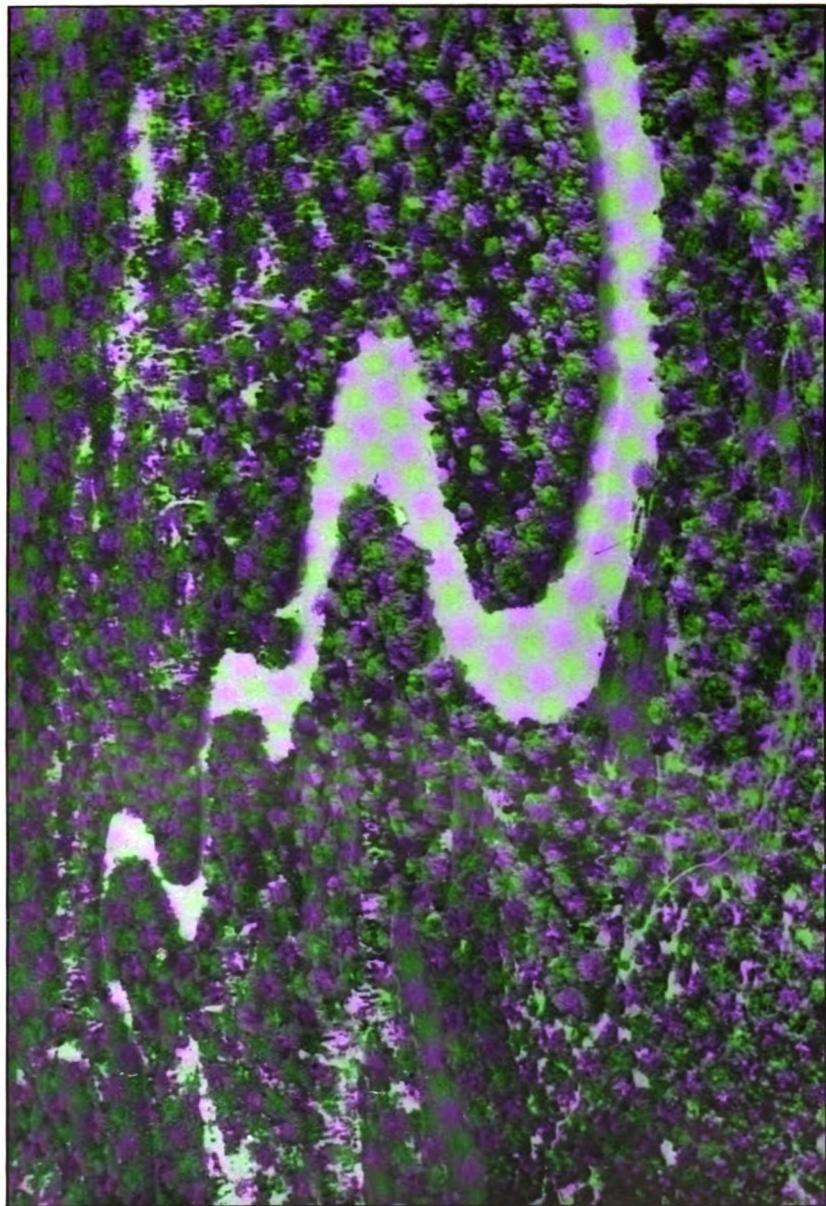
"Come on, you sons of Satan. The bridge! the bridge! Don't crawl—run. If we're not there in five minutes you'll all be drowned like rats, and jolly well serve you right." '*Haiya! upesi sana!*' Unfeeling brute that I was, I actually made them run, and I ran myself until suddenly I fell into a deep hole, after which I swam.

But at last the bush gave way to dense tropical forest, and then we saw a broad stretch of brown swirling water—the Ruaha. Under

the trees was a dry patch of earth—the first we had seen since leaving Temagwe, and there the engineers were camped. I sat down in the O.C.'s tent while some one poured me out a stiff whisky-and-soda.

"Don't want to rush you, but if you want to cross that bridge you'll have to look slippy. The river's rising every second, and the whole structure will give way soon."

The man who spoke pointed to the river, across which a long string of porters were creeping slowly in Indian file, apparently supported by nothing. The bridge was practically under water, although I was told that when built it was fifteen feet above the surface. Maganga soon hustled up our boys, and saying good-bye to the white men who had been so hospitable, I commenced the crossing. It was a tricky business. The roadway of the bridge had long since been washed away, and now nothing was left but logs and branches, on which one had to balance while the water swirled past one's legs. The whole structure groaned and vibrated in the terrible force of the current, and it only required a moderate-sized drifting tree to smash it up completely. I was now



The Coastal Region of a typical African river, showing Mangroves and Forest.

Photographed by Seaplane Squadron, R.A.F.

feeling horribly weak, and had it not been for Maganga's support I should have been washed away a dozen times. It took us fifteen minutes to get across, and when at last I felt the firm but wet and muddy earth underneath my feet, I heaved a great sigh of relief. I had beaten the bridge, anyway.

There still remained another three miles of floods, but although they were deeper in places than those we had passed, they did not trouble us so much. All anxiety was over, and but for the fever I should have been the happiest man on earth. It was dusk when we stepped out of the water on to dry land, and a few yards farther on we pitched our camp. Luckily it did not rain, and in spite of wet blankets I passed a comparatively comfortable night. Next morning we learned that the bridge had collapsed a few hours after we had crossed it.

For two whole days the fever raged, but thanks to Maganga's wonderful nursing I pulled through all right. On the morning of the third day I was well enough to leave for Iringa in a motor ambulance that my Flight-Commander had thoughtfully despatched as soon as I had acquainted him of my illness. Leaving the flat

plain of the Ruaha river, we now commenced a tremendous climb into the Iringa hills, through which we ran until at last the picturesque little settlement of Iringa came into sight. Our aerodrome was three miles farther south, and after the doctor had seen me he said I might push on. As I had with me a large bag of mail and various stores, it may be imagined that my arrival occasioned some excitement in the Flight.

CHAPTER XVII.

ACROSS CENTRAL AFRICAN TABLELAND.

I REPORTED to Captain Hodgkinson (otherwise "Hodge"), my new Flight-Commander. He was one of the old Henry Farman pilots, and he had participated in many a lengthy bombing raid behind the enemies' lines. Only two machines were available, B.E.2.C's. (naval type), with 100 H.P. Rolls-Royce R.A.F. engines, and both these were urgently needed at Njombe, a German post nearly 150 miles farther south, which was now General Northeys headquarters. At present there was no motor road to the place, and all our stores, including bombs and petrol, had to be sent by porters. The only other pilot in the flight was Murray, and he left by air for Njombe on the day following my arrival. He landed safely, but before he had time to carry out a reconnaissance over the

German positions within range of Njombe, he was ordered to proceed to Ssongea, the headquarters of one of Northeys' columns, 150 miles south of Njombe and fifty miles east of Lake Nyassa. Hodge was now ordered to proceed to Njombe. He left the first fine morning, and arrived without any adventure other than that provided by a few thunderstorms through which he had to fly.

My own orders were to take charge of the Iringa depot and superintend the forwarding of stores. The hangar, by the way, contained one aeroplane minus its starboard top plane. Hodge had wired to Daresalam for a spare plane for this machine, and we had received notification of its despatch. Three weeks later it arrived. It had been carried the whole distance by relays of porters, who pathetically described the journey as a "very bad business." When we came to fit it to the machine it was found to be the wrong size and utterly useless. The porters decided that it had been an even worse business when I told them this. It reminds me of something equally typical of the East African campaign that happened a few months after our arrival in the country. We were urgently in

need of spare engines, and several cables had been sent home with the information. One day three mysterious looking cases, labelled 26th Sq., R.F.C., East Africa, arrived at Bombay. After remaining on the wharf for a week or two, some bright person thought it would be a good idea to put them in a boat leaving for Mombasa. Here they eventually arrived, and a wire announcing this fact was sent to General Headquarters, Nairobi. These good people disclaimed all knowledge of them, and the engines were reshipped and sent back to England.

At last I received a wire from Headquarters ordering me to proceed with all available supplies of petrol and bombs, and our one good hangar, to Njombe. A hundred stout porters were placed at my disposal, and it was arranged that at a point half-way to Njombe I should be met by another convoy, to which the first gang would transfer their loads, and then return to Iringa.

On the evening previous to my departure I paraded the stout hundred, and asked them if there were any who felt too sick to undertake the long trek. There was not a single one among them who did not. With a very grave face I

178 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

ordered Maganga to bring my medicine chest, and then I addressed the black multitude.

"The white man," I said, "is very sorrowful to see so much sickness among his black children. It grieves him greatly that he cannot abandon the *safari* and give to all many days rest. Fortunately Allah has been so kind as to place in the white man's hands a wonderful medicine—a medicine that will cure all aches of the head and the limbs and the stomach, and with great compassion the Masungu will give this to his children, making no charge whatever!"

There was a loud murmuring in the ranks as Maganga produced a large tin cannister of crystallised quinine.

I now called for the first patient, and a huge Swahili who complained of severe pains in the leg limped forward very gingerly.

"Give him a spoonful, and make him chew it up!" I said to Maganga.

Maganga knew what was required of him. Making the nigger open his mouth wide, he literally stuffed it full of the loathsome stuff. The poor old porter gasped and spluttered, but there was no getting rid of that diabolical taste, and to the intense merriment of every one he

walked back to the ranks *without the slightest sign of a limp.*

"Well, what do you think of that for medicine?" I cried. "Come on—next, please!"

Needless to say there was no next, and when I asked a second time if there were any who would care to stay behind for treatment, there were no volunteers.

We left at daybreak, and in ten minutes reached the little Ruaha river, which flows at the foot of the aerodrome. Here our difficulties commenced. A very ingenious pontoon ferry had been constructed by some of our mechanics from empty petrol tins, and this served to take the porters across eight at a time; but unfortunately we had with us an ox supplied by the A.S.C. at Iringa to serve as meat rations on the way. For sheer downright obstinacy and contrariness that ox would be hard to equal. It refused point-blank to move on to the pontoon, and after it had laid low several of the men who tried to push it on, we decided to swim it across. A rope was procured, and after a severe struggle this was secured over its horns: the rope was carried across the river, and the boys on the other side pulled until the brute at last had to give in. All went

well until it reached mid-stream, when the rope suddenly came off, and the wretched animal began to float swiftly away. It was a moment for quick action. If the animal were lost the boys would be entirely without food after the first day's *safari*. They stood there helplessly watching. Cursing them roundly for their idiocy I jumped in myself—carrying the noose end of the rope in my hands. I had no difficulty in reaching the brute, and after a great fight at last managed to fix the noose. The boys pulled, and once more the treasured ration was under way. Finally it was beached and assisted up the slippery bank. For a minute or two it stood there regaining its breath—then suddenly, without a second's warning, it put down its head and lifted a couple of its black enemies clean into the air. By this time I had landed myself, and puffing like a grampus from my exertions, I staggered up the bank. At the top was the ox, looking remarkably well pleased with its morning's performance. It eyed me so kindly that I began to credit it with the possession of a sense of gratitude for my having rescued it!

“Cush! Cush!” I cried familiarly, and put-

ting out my hand attempted to stroke its dripping nose.

Alas! my confidence was ill-placed. Lowering its horns, the ill-mannered brute charged, and catching me just about the middle, sent me head over heels back into the river. As I rose to the surface, I could see the top of its head floating swiftly down stream, and with a fervent prayer that all the crocodiles of the Little Ruaha might be waiting for it below, I swam to the shore.

The porters took their loss with due philosophy, and the *safari* was soon on the road once more. For six miles the track lay through the same dense bush and forest in which a few months later I was destined to have the most terrible experience of my life. This morning the sun shone brightly, the road was good, and the air delightfully fresh and exhilarating. In spite of the tragic loss of the ox, the porters made the forest echo with their weird but melodious chants, the birds were singing sweetly, and the whole atmosphere seemed charged with that wonderful champagne—like something that is found only in the highlands of East and Central Africa. Life con-

182 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

tained nothing but pure happiness, or at least it did for the first six miles, after which we commenced to climb up the steep escarpment of the Iringa hills. Here the porters automatically ceased to sing, and one heard nothing but wicked Swahili cuss-words, with an occasional supplication to Allah to send a cloud across the face of the sun, or to wear down the summit of the hill and make the path less trying for the feet. At last we emerged on to a narrow tableland fringed on either side with heath-clad hills, the highest summits of which were already capped with storm-cloud. The sun, however, still shone, and without halting longer than to collect the various stragglers, we pushed on across the tableland. Very soon the ground became swampy, the going very rough. The porters commenced to complain of their feet and every other portion of their anatomy, and when, after six hours hard marching we sighted an old broken-down mission building, I decided to call a halt. Before we reached it, however, the storm broke with more than usual fury, and in less than two seconds we were drenched to the skin. The building was about the size of an ordinary English barn, and as it promised

to shelter many undesirable species of living things, I decided to pitch my tent a few yards away from it. Luckily there was an abundance of dry firewood, and the porters were soon singing merrily as they dried their clothes and cooked their last ration of food. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is the invariable philosophy of the black man of East Africa, and so far no one seemed to worry a little bit over the loss of the ox.

For upwards of an hour the storm raged fiercely. The lightning at times was terrifying, and the thunder sounded like the explosion of giant mines. Still it was very cheery to lie comfortably on one's bed feeling just nicely tired, to experience that delightful glow of satisfaction at having done a good day's march, and to look out from the tent and witness the wild and unbridled raging of the elements, to listen to the pelting of the rain, and to feel warm and dry and absolutely secure underneath one's six square feet of canvas. Just before dusk the rain ceased, and taking my shot-gun I walked down the road in time to bag an enormous spur-winged goose that came flying overhead.

184 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

With cold roast partridge (from Iringa), sauté potatoes à la Maganga, boiled cauliflower, and pineapple and cream for dinner, it may be imagined that this wild wilderness came very near to being a paradise now, even without the stimulating effect produced by a portion of the most popular medicine known in the tropics.

We awakened next morning to find the whole country hidden in a dense pall of cold wet mist—the first I had seen since leaving England. In my thin tropical clothing I felt the cold intensely, and the poor old niggers looked thoroughly unhappy. They clung to their fires like drowning men to straws, but half an hour before sunrise I had them under way, and the weight of the loads soon drove the cold from their bodies. It was very unpleasant for all that, for the track was overgrown with long grass heavy with ice-cold dew, which was sprayed over one's body as by a shower-bath.

How I longed to see the sun and bathe in its pleasant heat! We saw it only for a few minutes, however, and then it commenced to rain. It rained without break from that

moment until three o'clock in the afternoon—a cold miserable drizzle that seemed to soak into one's body and damp one's very soul. The porters became very depressed indeed, for towards the end of the day they slowly began to approach the true significance of the loss of the ox. "How could I expect them to hurry when their stomachs were empty?" they complained.

"Stop your grumbling!" I cried. "At Buena I shall myself go out and shoot you meat—as much as you can stuff into your fat carcases in one day."

They seemed slightly dubious, but when Maganga told some of them the tale of how I had once shot seven buck in seven minutes, and, according to my faithful chronicler, with seven bullets, they appeared impressed and took heart once more.

We reached Buena—the half-way camp to Njombe—about 4 P.M. A couple of deserted huts made a billet for the boys, but as before I had my own tent pitched well out of the range of the terrible hut tick, which is the host of the germ of Spirillum or recurrent fever. I had cause to regret my choice of a camping

186 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

ground before bidding farewell to Buena, but more of that later.

My immediate task was to procure food for the boys — and a local native whom I questioned seemed anything but optimistic.

“Buck plentiful round here?” I inquired.

“No, master!” he replied.

“Just a few odd herds I suppose!”

“No, master!”

“Are there *any* buck?”

“No, master——”

“This man — liar, master!” suddenly interrupted Maganga, whose language at times hardly savoured of the Mission-room. “He say no *nyama* here because he wants all himself. He very big liar!”

“All right, Maganga! Tell him that my porters are very hungry and that some of them are cannibals. If he doesn’t show me where the buck are I’ll have him roasted for food.”

As a result of our gentle persuasion the nigger said he would take me straight away, and without bothering to change my wet clothes we set off up a steep cliff, on a tableland at the top of which my guide said we might find kudu. It was a stiff climb after the heavy day’s march,

but it is wonderful what the prospect of good hunting will do to a tired Englishman. The tableland was clad in stunted forest, flitting among the trees of which I saw more varieties of butterflies than I had seen in the whole of my stay in East Africa. There was not the slightest sign of game, however, not even an ancient spoor, and I began to believe that the native had been right after all. We plodded on through the forest for nearly four miles, and then the lowering sun decided me to return. I now began to feel the strain of the hard day, my legs commenced to drag, and then suddenly through a patch of undergrowth I caught sight of a fawn-coloured something moving ever so gently. Gone in a second was all sensation of tiredness. I could feel my nerves tightening up like fiddle-strings. Quietly dropping to my knees, I waited until the target became clearer and then fired. There was a scream, the foremost object dropped, and immediately two immense eland came charging down almost on the top of me. Moving swiftly on one side, I gave the bigger one a shot in the shoulder as it passed, and it dropped without a murmur.

Two fine eland now lay on the ground, and

without bothering with the rest of the herd I sent the boy back to camp and sat down and filled my pipe. It was dusk when a loud clamouring proclaimed the arrival of the hungry porters. They set to work on the buck immediately, skinning them rapidly and then cutting them up into "loads"; but in spite of all hurry it was dark when at last we started for the camp. The local boy led the way, and with my rifle at full cock I followed close beside him. We had not been going half an hour before a terrible roar reverberated through the stillness of the forest. The porters began to shout and sing, but there was more than a touch of nervousness in their voices, and in mine too when I suddenly asked the guide if he saw anything moving just in front of us. Lion No. 1 was quickly joined by a friend, and soon there must have been at least half a dozen prowling through the darkness on either side. Naturally they were after the meat, and the porters, who recognised that the safest place was nearest my rifle, began to crowd up in a most embarrassing manner.

"If you want to come near me throw your blank-blank meat away," I cried. It would

have been a very bold lion that would have made them do that, however, and at last they decided to camp on the spot for the night. I had no objection to their doing this, and I pushed on to camp with only the guide as company. It was a weird sensation walking along through that forest in the starlight, with a thousand ghostly shapes stalking through the shadows. Several times I discharged my gun at imaginary lions, and just before reaching the edge of the cliff I nearly died of fright when a flock of guinea-fowl suddenly flew out of a leafy tree. The climb down was a perilous business, but it was very cheering to see the fires of the camp below, from which now and again a red or green Very light went shooting up into the black velvet of the night. Maganga could always be depended on to do the right thing in an emergency such as this, and it speaks much for the intelligence of the East African nigger that he would actually hunt out the pistol and cartridges from the stores and use them to such advantage.

He was very pleased to see me safely back, and the dinner that waited me was a masterpiece. All night long we heard the lions roar-

ing on the top of the cliff, but in the morning all the boys turned up safely. As a token of their appreciation of my efforts in procuring the meal they gave me a special dance. It was decided to rest one day at Buena and await the arrival of the second convoy of porters from Njombe. After breakfast I was lying on my bed enjoying a quiet read, when suddenly I felt a sharp nip at the back of my neck, followed quickly by another on my chest and arm. Jumping up quickly, I was horrified to see that the whole floor of the tent was literally a moving brown mass of ants—*the terrible siafu*. With a shout of terror I leapt on to the floor and out of the tent, but by that time hundreds of the diabolical little beasts were running over my body, biting like red-hot needles. Maganga soon gave the alarm. Ripping off my pyjamas he set to work pulling the brutes off my flesh, and with the help of the other niggers I was soon clear. But my tent was absolutely in the hands of the enemy. Maganga once more took charge. Very much against their will, he made the porters go down and lift the tent bodily from the ground and bring it up to the huts. I have never seen such a ludicrous spectacle in

my life, for with their practically bare bodies the poor old porters hadn't a chance of keeping the *siafu* away. They danced and kicked and swore like madmen, while, like an ungrateful brute, I laughed until I was helpless. They joined in the laugh readily enough when the last ant had been pulled off their flesh. The nigger has a very ready sense of humour, and is quick to appreciate a joke even if it is against himself.

The Njombe convoy turned up just before sun-down. They were a very rough-looking crowd, and the native policemen in charge said they would desert at the first chance. As a matter of fact they gave me very little trouble, possibly because a nigger always feels happier when he is marching homewards.

Early next morning the loads were changed over, and bidding farewell to my old Iringa boys we set out on the long South trail once more. It proved to be the most uninteresting day of the trip. The country through which we passed was what is known as park-land. There was no human habitation, no game, and the landscape was dull and monotonous. It rained without ceasing the whole time, and I was very glad

192 Flying and Sport in East Africa,

indeed when we pitched our camp and I was able to change into dry clothes.

The next day was better. The park-land gave way to rolling grassy plains, almost identical with the country surrounding our English Salisbury, and intersected with clear bubbling rivers with picturesque wooded banks. In the morning the sun shone for quite a time, but after midday another wretched thunderstorm came along, and we marched the last three miles to Malangali through driving hailstone. We were now nearly 6000 feet above sea-level and the cold at night was intense. Malangali is simply an entrenched military camp, and it had been the scene of a very bloody battle between a force of General Northey and a vastly superior body of the enemy. Luckily several of the huts were intact and provided also with mud fireplaces, in which we soon had roaring fires made.

The storm passed over immediately after we had reached shelter—it invariably did. Just before dusk Maganga appeared, dragging by the arm an enormous nigger, who, strange to relate, was blubbering like a child.

“Hello! What’s up?” I cried.

“This man he got plenty pain!” Maganga

explained with a broad and most unsympathetic grin. "He say he got one devil inside his tooth—hurt very much—he want you pull him out."

"Pull out a tooth? Gracious! I'm not a dentist!"

"That's all right, master," replied my faithful slave; "big nigger no feel pain like little nigger. You takee tooth out very easy. You got plenty tools inside box."

Turning to the poor nigger, I explained that I was no doctor, but if he felt very bad indeed and couldn't wait till we reached Njombe I would do my best.

As he seemed anxious to have the job over, I explored one of the mechanic's boxes and found a useful-looking pair of wire pincers. Procuring an empty beer bottle (evidently this hut had been used by the Staff) I extracted the cork and made a couple of excellent gags.

For want of a better anaesthetic I gave my patient a tumblerful of neat gin, which he swallowed without turning a hair, and then I told him to squat down on a petrol box just outside the hut. Thanks once more to Maganga, I had by this time a deeply interested and highly facetious audience. They struggled and fought for

the best seats, and by the way Maganga respectfully led some of them up to the front rows, I began to suspect that he was making quite a good thing out of it.

Personally I had no relish for the task. I have always had an intense dislike to anything savouring of dentistry, and to be called at a moment's notice to carry out so delicate an operation before the earnest gaze of such a large and critical audience, was an ordeal at which the most capable surgeon in the world might tremble. Looking into the yawning maw of the negro, I decided that I'd better have an anæsthetic myself before starting. After I had partaken of my second, I rolled up my sleeves, grasped the pliers, closed them on a molar that looked as though it would stand a fair amount of strain—and pulled—pulled until great beads of perspiration ran down my brow—pulled with all the strength of my two arms—pulled until the nigger rose up from the seat, towed by his own molar—pulled until at last I had to give up from sheer physical exhaustion.

"Devil?" I gasped. "There's ten million of them in that old tooth!"

"How are you feeling, old man?" I asked

my patient. He replied that his tooth was aching.

“Shall I have another try ?”

“Yes, master !” was the very tearful but optimistic response.

“Maganga, get me the heaviest nigger in the crowd !”

A great burly Wabena was quickly forthcoming.

“Look here, Tom Thumb, you’ve just got to put your arms round this unfortunate brother of yours and hold him down while I pull.”

He grinned intelligently.

By this time the effect of the anæsthetic was wearing off, and quickly tossing off another I commenced work once more. This time it resolved itself not into a tow, but into a tug of war between the fat Wabena and myself. Forgotten completely was the poor man between us — it was a sheer test of strength — and the audience showed its interest in the varying fortunes of the contest with excited shouts and cat-calls. To cut a long story short, it ended in a draw — a double one. The molar suddenly left its moorings, the fat Wabena and the patient subsided backwards, and neatly re-

covering my balance, I triumphantly held up the blood-stained pincers—the hideously fanged tusk locked in their jaws—amid the enthusiastic and deafening acclamations of the crowd. It was a moment of exquisite triumph, and there could have been no more fitting tribute to my skill than when two porters stepped forward and offered themselves for treatment. To Maganga's obvious disappointment, I said I would deal with them *bado kidogo* (after a little while), which is the East African manner of expressing infinity. At present the need for further anæsthetic treatment was too urgent, and I retired with accustomed dignity to my tent.

It was fitting that the morning of the last day of the *safari* should be heralded by a terrific thunderstorm accompanied by a shrieking ice-cold south-easterly gale. Our rations were too low for me to wait for finer weather, however, and we pushed on soon after dawn. Although the porters had lived on the table-land all their lives they suffered terribly from the cold, and after my long stay on the coast, and in the sweltering valley of the Rufiji river, it may be imagined that, clad only in thin khaki drill, I did not feel too happy

myself. The rain soaked through everything, and the wind seemed to suck every calorie of heat from one's body.

It was very late in the afternoon when my eyes gladdened at the sight of the little white fort or *boma* of Njombe. By that time the rain had ceased, and the white walls gleamed brightly in the evening sunshine. To the east stretched an unending line of low, grassy, treeless hills,—to the south-east rose a great purple mass of mountains—the mighty Living-stones—beyond which lay hidden the magic blue waters of Lake Nyassa.

We arrived at dusk, and a magnificent welcome awaited me.

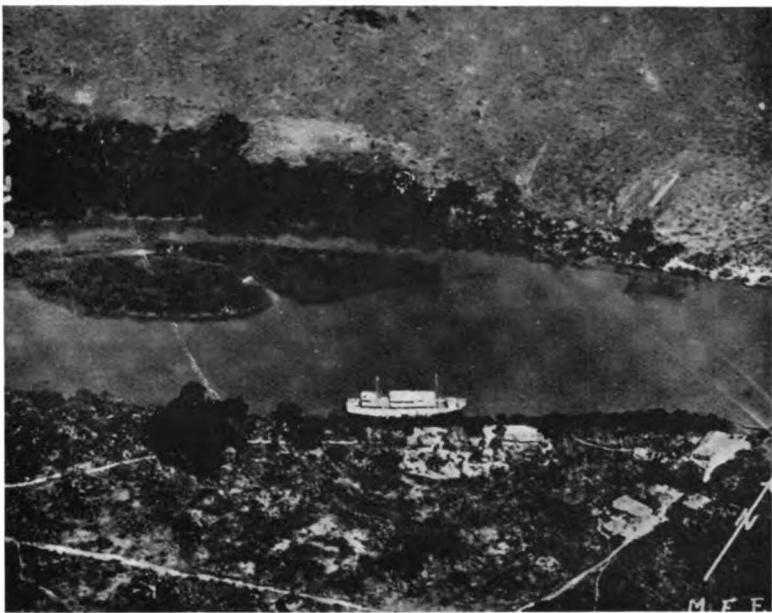
The aerodrome had been prepared on the summit of one of these hills, three miles east of the German fort, and a colder and more bleak position could not have been chosen. We had no tents, but large grass huts or *bandas* had been prepared, which, with several additional loads of grass, proved to be quite comfortable. In our mess *banda*, however, we had to keep alight a roaring fire, for the cold, particularly in the morning, was intense, or at least it appeared so to us.

A certain force of the enemy was reported to be holding a position on the Pitu river, a sub-tributary of the Rufiji, and the General was anxious that we should confirm this report at the first opportunity. Unfortunately the rains prevented all flying after 3 p.m., and in the early morning the ground was usually hidden by a heavy mist. However, a chance came by the end of the week, and one morning about nine we set out. The view from a height of 600 feet was magnificent. As far as the eye could see stretched the rolling grass-clad hills, intersected with brightly glistening streams, which here and there tossed themselves over cliffs and precipices in feathery cascades. To the west the ragged blue Livingstone Mountains hid from view the waters of Lake Nyassa. My soul yearned passionately for just one little glimpse of this magic inland sea, but my yearning was not to be gratified for many weeks. We followed the wide motor road until we reached Lupembe, a mission station twenty-five miles east of Njombe.

Lupembe marks the eastern extremity of the vast tableland that occupies nearly the whole of Central Africa, and from this point the land

slopes down in a great escarpment to the coastal plains. The grass-land now gave place to wild and primitive forest, through which, just here and there, we caught a glimpse of raging mountain torrents and the gleam of foaming waterfalls. At the foot of the escarpment flows the Ruhudje river, one of the great tributaries of the Rufiji, and into which runs the Pitu river. Our map was simply atrocious, but we were enabled to identify the river by information that had been given to us by Captain Sutherland, a well-known East African explorer, who was then attached to Northey's staff. Although our altimeter was registering a height of only 2000 feet, the difference in altitude between this part of the country and our aerodrome was 4000 feet, which gave us a net height over the ground of 6000 feet. This, for observation purposes, was too much, so I asked Hodge to come down. When he opened the throttle once more we had lost 3000 feet, and we were thus flying below the level of our own aerodrome—quite a unique experience. There was no difficulty now in spotting the enemy's camps—one near the Pitu, and two more close to the Ruhudje; and

there was no doubt about their being occupied, for hardly had we got over the first than a shell burst about 800 feet below. We had no bombs, but we had something almost as useful—thirty-six rifle grenades, carried in a special frame that had been invented by a R.N.A.S. pilot. We did not use them at once, but waited until the Huns had decided that we were on a peaceful reconnaissance. Meanwhile I busied myself with my sketching-block and note-book. At last Hodge decided that the psychological moment had come, and he commenced operations. With strict fairness he dropped twelve grenades at each camp, and we watched them burst among the grass huts with an enthusiasm that I am sure was hardly shared by the Huns below. Our job finished, the machine was pointed homewards—and then we were shocked to see that the escarpment or cliff down which we had flown was now almost hidden in a dense black mass of thunder-cloud, which even as we looked was ripped from top to bottom by a lurid flash of lightning: *the way home was blocked*. Our predicament at first glance seemed a hopeless one. Below was swamp and flooded veldt, through which the



A German steamer lying in the Rufiji river.



A typical German fortified camp.
Note thorn fence or *boma*, and covered-in trench line.

main stream of the Ruhudje only here and there showed its individuality as it curved its weary way to the north-east to join the Rufiji. To the west the land rose rapidly in a series of forest-clad ridges, until it was lost in the deluge of rain that poured down from the cloud-pall above. Our only possible hope of salvation lay in our being able to fly *over* the storm. This would depend upon the climbing powers of the machine, which in this part of the world were not great; but we had lost a considerable weight in bombs and petrol, and Hodge "shoved her nose up" almost to stalling-point. At the end of half an hour the altimeter was registering 3000 feet (*i.e.*, 7000 feet above the ground immediately below), and we were just level with the top of the cloud. Setting a compass-bearing for Njombe, we flew straight towards the escarpment. Looking back, I had a last glimpse of the Ruhudje valley, where three tall columns of brown smoke marked the positions of the camps we had just bombed, and then, as we reached the cloud, the ground was blocked from view. It would have been distinctly cheering for the Huns, . I thought, if only they had known how, in ten

minutes, the tables had been turned. In spite of our great height we were now hardly more than 100 feet from the surface of the cloud, which spread like an endless virgin snow-field as far as the eye could see. Above, the sun shone brightly from an azure sky, and it was difficult to realise that only 1000 feet below the thunder was crashing and the rain falling in swirling torrents on to the mountain-side. Engine failure now would have meant—well, one dare not contemplate it. We pushed on with a dull sort of numbness gripping our hearts, for we knew that if the storm reached as far back as our camp—and experience told us that this was highly probable—our fate was sealed. In half an hour there was not the slightest sign of the end of it, but fifteen minutes later we sighted a mountain peak, basking in the sunshine, and looking like some wonderful fairy island floating on a sea of snow. This told us that at any rate our direction was right, but it showed also that the cloud-bank *did* extend over the camp. Was there clear air between it and the ground? If so, we were safe; if not, there was every chance that we should fly into a hillside

or something equally unsympathetic. Another quarter of an hour passed like a year in jail. Our eyes were aching with the dazzling whiteness of the unending "snow-field." By this time we must be somewhere near home if our compass was accurate. "For God's sake put an end to it, Hodge!" I bawled. "We'll give it another ten minutes," I heard him reply, but even as he spoke the engine stopped dead — *the petrol had given out!* A strange uncanny silence followed, relieved only by the whistling of the air between the struts as we commenced to glide earthwards. In less than a minute we entered the cloud; immediately everything became pitch dark, and the rain started to batter like hail on the planes and the wind screen. We were bumped as though the machine was caught in the vortex of a great aerial whirlpool, and the dismal shrieking of the struts and wires sounded like the voices of sirens following down in an ecstasy of glee to witness the ghastly death that waited us below. We should know our fate soon, I thought. After all, it would be a quick death, far better than dying of dysentery or sleeping sickness. I wondered how long it would be

before they found us: would the vultures—a terrific bump almost threw me out of the machine; grasping hold of a strut, I looked overboard, searching the darkness below for some gleam of light. It was even too dark to see the instruments, and it was hardly possible to tell whether we were side-slipping or even flying the right way up. My heart turned cold as I looked at the luminous dial of my watch—we had been gliding three minutes. All hope was gone now; another minute—and then suddenly came a lightish patch a hundred feet below: it was a gap in the cloud that, as our eyes strained towards it, suddenly opened and revealed a carpet of green in the centre of which was a very familiar object—our hangar. *The petrol had given out immediately above the aerodrome!* Had it given out one minute before, or one minute later, we should have crashed, for a certainty. As we glided gently down I undid my flying cap, and taking out a little gollywog that had rested therein for many moons, kissed it affectionately.

“What do you think of that for a bit of fine cross-country flying?” said Hodge as we climbed out.

“Garn!” I said, “’twas this mascot of mine
that did the trick!”

It is good to feel the firm earth beneath one’s
feet after an adventure like this. I dreamed
that night I was dead, and the penance for
my sins was that I had to gaze at a sheet of
white paper for eternity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HUNT FOR MAJOR WINTGENS.

THE rains now became so heavy that nearly a fortnight passed without any flying at all.

As soon as the weather cleared we made several reconnaissances over the Pitu positions, but each time we had great difficulty in getting through the cloud-banks that seemed to hang over all elevated districts of East Africa during the rainy season. A day or two later the Intelligence people reported that a very strong German force under the command of Major Wintgens, that had broken through our lines near Lake Nyassa some weeks before, was now in the neighbourhood of Lake Rukwa, a swampy sheet of water 150 miles N.W. of Njombe. To reach this place by air would mean a flight of at least 5 hours, and unfortunately our machine had only sufficient

petrol-carrying capacity to permit of a maximum flight of $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. By carrying extra petrol, however, and replenishing the tank during the trip, it might be possible, and the need for a reconnaissance was so urgent that it was decided to make the attempt. This method had been successfully employed before by two R.N.A.S. airmen, and on the first fine morning we set out on our hunt for Major Wintgens, feeling very confident. I carried two extra tins of petrol in my cockpit, and it was arranged that I should fill up the tank as soon as the engine had consumed an equivalent amount (viz., 4 gallons). For the first hour we flew over the great rolling Ubena plain, and then we reached the wild and rocky escarpment of the Piroto Mountains which form the northern continuation of the Livingstones. Here I was pleased to receive a signal from Hodge to empty my tins, for, packed as they were between my legs in the tiny cockpit, I had not been able to stir an inch since climbing in.

In this type of machine the main tank actually forms the observer's seat, and it is filled by means of an orifice situated im-

mediately between his legs. To empty my first tin, then, I had first of all to remove the stopper of the tank, invert the tin so that its nozzle came immediately above the orifice, and then remove the screw-cap. After a severe struggle, during which I experienced an extremely painful attack of cramp, I manœuvred my tin into position and unscrewed the cap. Immediately there came an overpowering smell of petrol and a horrible gurgling sound, and then with a gasp of terror I saw that the spirit was not entering the tank, but spilling over the sides on to the floor of the *nacelle*, and running out almost on to the red-hot exhaust pipes, which in this machine were carried down each side of the fuselage as far as the pilot's seat.

"What the blank, blank, blank are you doing?" I heard Hodge yell, as, throttling back the engine, he pushed the nose of the machine down to cool the pipes. With feverish fingers I tried to replace the cap on the tin, and in order to keep the petrol from shooting outwards I turned it in towards my body. With both legs now twisted almost double with cramp, with that beastly liquid soaking through my thick

clothing on to the flesh, and Hodge swearing like a trooper behind, while I expected each second to see the machine leap into flames, it may be imagined that I was feeling very unhappy. Suddenly, however, there flashed across my mind the memory of a certain comic American film in which the hero, heroine, and a few other characters are seen trying to stop a burst water-main by sitting on the hole, and the similarity between that and the present situation struck me as being so remarkable that I could not help but laugh. Hodge apparently did not see the joke, and I will admit that even for me it seemed to wear slightly thin when, a minute or two after I had successfully stoppered the tin, I began to feel an intense burning sensation all over the lower portions of my anatomy. The petrol was evaporating so rapidly that, becoming a freezing mixture, it was drawing all the heat of the body to the areas above mentioned, producing a severe form of frost-bite. Soon I lost all desire to remain in a sitting position, and a great longing for home came over me. As it was now hopeless to attempt to complete the reconnaissance, Hodge put the machine about, and ninety minutes

210 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

later we landed safely. It was then found that before pouring in the petrol I should have removed a wire-gauze filter which, because of its fineness, had not allowed the spirit to flow in quickly enough.

As Wintgens was still supposed to be in the neighbourhood of Lake Rukwa, next day we set out again. The mechanics had removed the filter, and also they had replaced the ordinary stopper of each petrol tin with a piece of inner cycle tubing, about twelve inches long, which would act as a spout. The extremities of these spouts were tied up with string, and my instructions were to untie the string of the can I was using, place the spout inside the orifice of the tank, and then invert the tin. A very interesting thing happened, however, when we got our height. The petrol gas expanded with the decrease in atmospheric pressure, and the cycle tubing was blown up like a sausage balloon. But this did not interfere with the filling process, which was carried out successfully soon after we had rounded the western spur of the Piroto Mountain. It was very dismal country that we had to reconnoitre, clad almost without break in dense bush, and

The Hunt for Major Wintgens. 211

entirely uninhabited except in the immediate vicinity of Lake Rukwa and the Ruaha river. Although we scoured the whole district from a height of 500 feet, the only sign of the enemy that we saw was a small village that he had set on fire, evidently out of sheer wantonness. The Germans invariably burned or otherwise destroyed all crops in the districts through which they passed, and I heard later that on this occasion they had also hamstrung all the able-bodied natives, so that we could not use them as porters. Major Wintgens was one of the cleverest of Von Lettow's officers, and this "break-back" of his had certainly been a brilliant achievement, although with the number of troops General Northey had at his disposal it was impossible to prevent such a thing happening again and again.

It would have been a distinct triumph for us had we found him; but it was written otherwise, and we returned home feeling very disgusted in spite of the fact that we had put up what was then the record duration flight for the country—5 hours 9 minutes. Later we learned that the Intelligence Officer at Iringa, in giving his report, had made a mistake in

212 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

the map reference, the place we had reconnoitred being nearly 100 miles west of the area in which Wintgens had been last seen. We invited this officer to dine with us, but he did not come.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAKE NYASSA AND BEYOND.

WE were now completely cut off from the Northern Army and our squadron except by telegraph, and it was thus impossible to obtain further stores of aviation petrol and bombs. M.T. petrol, however, seemed to work quite well after it had been strained through chamois leather several times; and the local R.E.'s, under the command of Major Clarke, the brilliant engineer who had been responsible for the construction of Northey's splendid motor roads, designed a most terrible infernal machine, which worked even better than the familiar Hales. These bombs were made from ordinary petrol tins, dynamite being used instead of T.N.T., and the space between the explosive and the outer casing was filled with stones, iron nuts, nails, and any nasty-looking

bits of metal that could be found in the workshops of the Mechanical Transport Department. There was no safety device, of course, and a forced landing with a bomb like this under the planes would have been a risky business. It may be imagined that we always found a target of some description whenever we set out with a Clarke's bomb.

Information had been received by the General staff that a large force of Huns had crossed the Rovuma river into Portuguese territory, and that they were marching south so rapidly that it looked almost as though their plan was to invade Nyassaland and cut Northey's lines of communication. Also it was thought that their object might be to stir up rebellion among a certain tribe of natives, who in times past had been badly treated by the Portuguese. Things looked very serious indeed, and the General decided to move at once into Nyassaland. Hodge and I were overjoyed to hear that we were to join him there as soon as possible, but when we came to look at the map our optimism faded somewhat, for, to make the complete journey to Fort Johnston in one flight was quite out of the question, particularly so

as the prevalent wind on Lake Nyassa at this time of the year is almost due south. An aerodrome, however, had been prepared some time ago at Weidhaven, a small German settlement on the lake-side, 100 miles from Njombe and practically due west of Ssongea. Hodge decided that he would fly to this place with Corporal Walker in the observer's seat, dismantle the machine, and load it on one of the tiny Lake steamers sailing south to Fort Johnston. The plan was approved by the Staff, and I was ordered to proceed with the whole personnel and stores of the Flight by road to Alt Langenberg, a little port at the northern extremity of the lake, whence the main pass leads through the Livingstone Mountains to Njombe, and where we should be able to embark on the same boat that would call for Hodge at Weidhaven.

The distance between Njombe and Langenberg is only sixty miles, but the road lies through the wildest and most rugged part of the Livingstone Mountains, and even in the dry season it is no easy proposition to tackle. Now, in the height of East Africa's record rains, when every rivulet was a raging torrent and every road a canal, when the mountain-sides were

216 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

swept with freezing winds or hidden in dense mist, it promised to be a journey full of adventure.

In this respect I was not disappointed.

I had to take with me from Njombe about fifty loads of aeroplane stores and a complete hangar. A sergeant and four mechanics were detailed to travel with me and assist in all technical matters relating to the packing and unpacking of the stores.

For the first twenty or thirty miles we were able to travel by car, but when we reached the foothills of the Livingstones it was necessary to transfer everything to a large convoy of native porters who had been sent from the lake-side to meet me. These men were chiefly Yaos, strong-limbed, cheerful-dispositioned fellows, who, instead of keeping up a continuous grouse, like the porters of the coast, march gaily along with a song or chant on their lips. Fifty pounds was as much as one could expect each of them to carry through the mountains, and the loads were roughly weighed out and apportioned by their own *jumbes*, or headman. When all was ready the cry went up, "*Haija! Haija! Safari!*" ("Come on! Come on! The road!"), and the long column, led by the chief headman, com-

menced to move slowly forward up the narrow path that led almost vertically to the summit of the first hill.

People who picture tropical Africa as a land of interminable jungle and swamp would be very much surprised could they see the country through which we were now passing. Mile upon mile of rolling, dome-shaped, treeless hills, clad sparsely with grass and heath; but for the presence of the porters there was little to distinguish it from the hilly regions of Derbyshire and north-east Yorkshire. Through the valleys coursed swollen streams, which here and there fell in foaming cataracts hissing and booming over rocky beetling cliffs. The banks of these streams were thick with flowers, but never did we see so much as a respectable-sized bush. There were few inhabitants and no sign at all of villages; but we discovered later that building material is so scarce that the natives are forced to live in caves and dug-outs.

For several hours we climbed steadily, and then, about 3 P.M., the rain commenced. A biting easterly wind sprang up and added to our discomfiture, and we staggered along the narrow slippery path, feeling about as happy as so many

cats in a thunderstorm. The scantily-clad porters suffered terribly from the cold, but they sang in spite of it, and their cheery optimism gave us new heart. About 4 P.M. we reached a wide undulating tableland, when the monotonous grass-land ceased and gave way to sparse forest, through which the path meandered like a giant worm. The trees sheltered us somewhat from the wind, but the rain fell so heavily that the path was little else than a gushing stream of water. Hardly had the head of the column entered the forest than a mighty shout went up: "*Tembo! Tembo! Tazama!*" ("Elephant! Elephant! Look out!"). Loading my rifle, I rushed forward. There, standing in the middle of the path only a hundred yards away, his trunk swaying like a pendulum, his beady eyes flashing angrily, was an enormous bull elephant! My rifle was an ordinary .303; it was the first elephant I had ever seen in my life, and from what I had been told about these brutes there was every prospect of his charging immediately. A rapid glance round showed me that there was not a respectable-sized tree within a mile, and I also discovered that the porters had slipped quietly away through the undergrowth, and that I was left to face the

monster alone. The wind was blowing towards him, and there was not the slightest doubt that he was aware of my presence. I began to feel very unhappy. Many a time I had pictured meeting one of these great animals. In my mind's eye I had seen myself coolly stalking up within a few yards of it, carefully selecting the vital spot, taking steady aim, firing, then calmly lighting a cigarette preparatory to measuring the tusks. Now my one great desire in life was to see a huge hole in the ground into which I might disappear.

Would it notice if I walked backwards, I wondered. Still facing it, I began to shuffle slowly back, and then, with a shrill trumpeting, the brute suddenly flung its trunk upwards and charged. My heart came into my mouth. I felt my hair bristling under my helmet, yet somehow or other I had sufficient control over my nerves to stand where I was, lift my rifle, and fire into the middle of the great grey avalanche of flesh and bone. Then I slipped and fell. I heard the sound of breaking timber, felt the ground tremble as though shaken by an earthquake—and slowly realised that the beast had missed me.

Three or four hundred yards away I could hear it tearing headlong through the forest, and, judging by the terror-stricken screams of the men, I concluded that at least half of them must have been trampled to death. It transpired, however, that there were no casualties, but the crank-case of an aero-engine that happened to have been left in the path suffered considerably. We saw no more of the elephant.

We were not long in getting under way again, and just before nightfall sighted the camp fires of Tandala, a late German mission station, where we were to spend the night. I was invited to stay with the Camp Commandant, a very cheery gentleman who had recently returned from Nyassaland with considerable supplies of European groceries and other products of civilisation. Included in the treasure-trove was some Scrubbs' bath ammonia, and I was presented with a bottle of this delectable liquid. Maganga soon had a hot bath prepared, and he watched me while I poured in a little of the powerful smelling chemical.

"What's that, master?" he asked, with his unfailing curiosity.

"*Dowa*—medicine," I replied. "Smell!" And I passed the bottle to him.

The nostrils of the negro are very large and his lung capacity runs into many cubic inches. Maganga pushed the nozzle of the bottle nearly half an inch up his nose and breathed in. The effect was immediate and volcanic. When he recovered, instead of appearing annoyed with me, he simply shouted for Hamza Bin-Nazar, my second boy. Seizing this unfortunate wretch by the wool, Maganga, with great dexterity, forced the bottle up his nose and commanded him to breathe, encouraging this operation by a smart slap on the poor lad's chest. The general effect of this was even more dramatic than in Maganga's case, and, lest Hamza should be persuaded to pass the joke on, I deemed it advisable to rescue the bottle.

A hot bath, an excellent dinner, and the voluptuous music of a looted German gramophone dispelled the last shadow of discomfort, and even my host's lurid description of the mountain pass which we must tackle on the morrow failed to keep me awake that night.

We breakfasted an hour before sunrise. The climbing began almost immediately after leaving

222 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Tandala, the path zigzagging up the face of a steep cliff which towered nearly a thousand feet above the tableland. Half-way up we found ice, and soon the path resolved itself into a glorious slide, very convenient for any one wishing to get down in a hurry, but horribly difficult for those who wanted to get up. One could hardly help laughing to see the poor Yaos trying to get a footing on the slippery surface, and Maganga—who carried no load—shrieked with delight until he happened to strike a particularly well-lubricated patch himself. Even his matchless sense of humour failed to produce a grin when he finally fetched up against a cactus in the vicinity of Tandala.

It took us four hours to climb that thousand feet, and, in spite of a wind that felt like a million whips, we were bathed in perspiration when we reached the top. Here we rested, but as there was no fuel for making fires there was no temptation to loiter long. The scenery was magnificent. We had passed the region of the dome-shaped grassy hills, and were now in the heart of the wildest and most rugged part of the Livingstones. The tremendous peaks that surrounded us were rocky and untamed, although

here and there on the broader ledges we saw tiny gardens of maize belonging to the hardy mountain dwellers. How they reached some of these patches of cultivation was a mystery, for no one short of an Alpine expert could have climbed such terrible cliffs. We were told that they preferred to have their *shambas* in these risky places because of the elephants, which, in the space of a few minutes, will undo the constant labours of many years.

The going now became much easier. For many miles the path crept along the face of a mighty saddle-backed spur, but high peaks to the west still held the lake hidden from our sight. According to the map we were eight thousand five hundred feet above sea-level, and the air was as cold and invigorating as on a sunny day in early spring in England. The sun, indeed, shone so brightly that we began to think that at last the rains had washed themselves out. By two o'clock in the afternoon, when we took the trail once more after a cold lunch and a brief rest, the sky was still cloudless, and we pushed on with very light hearts. After nearly four months of almost continuous rain, it may be imagined how thoroughly depressed we had all become, and how

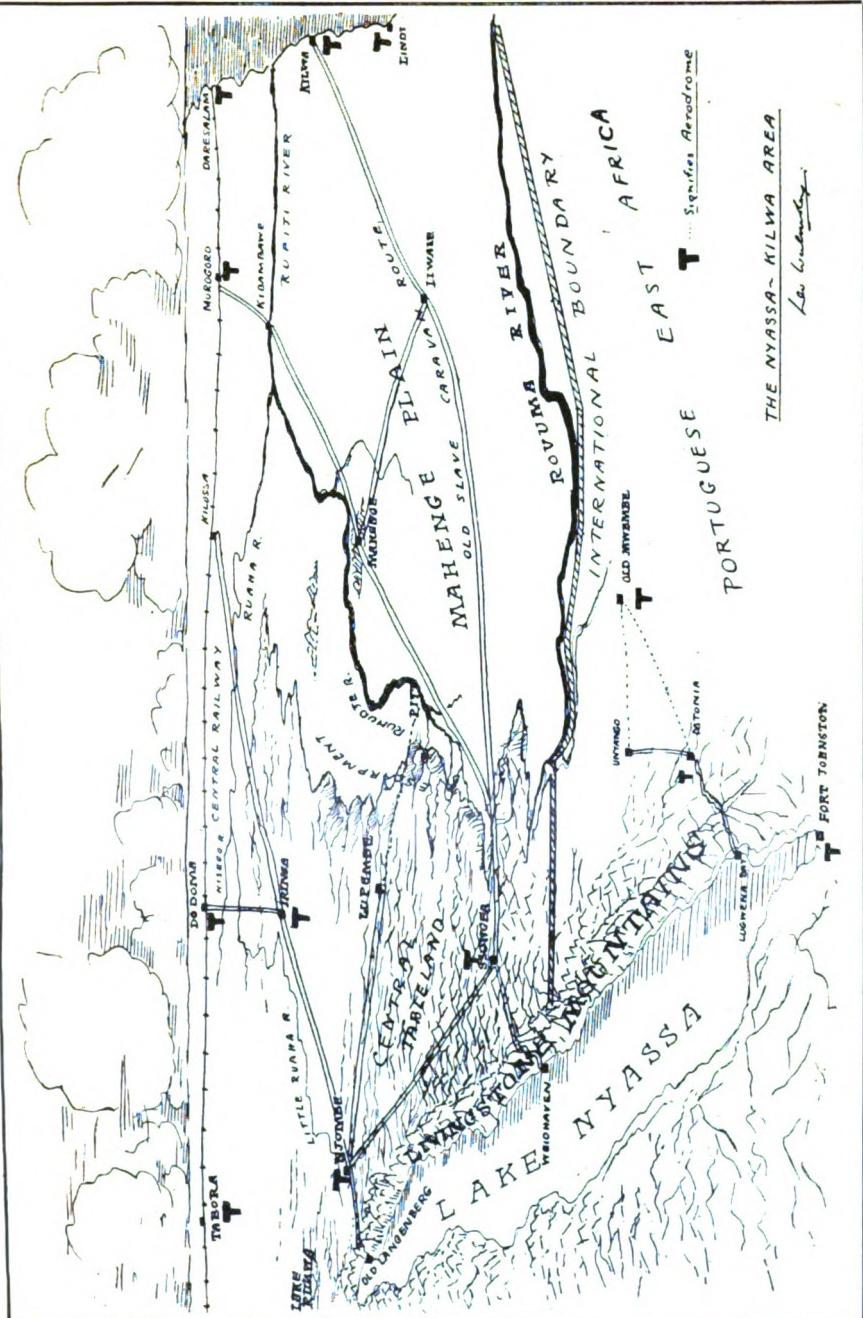
224 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

this glorious weather charged our bodies with electric energy. The porters sang gaily, and we whites felt as though we might be on our way to embark for six months' leave in England.

At 3 P.M. we rounded the last and highest mountain, and then, emerging from a dense patch of forest, we suddenly had our first sight of the lake. To describe the picture that we saw before us, framed by the black wind-twisted branches of the mountain trees, is beyond the power of my pen.

To me it seemed that Darkest Africa had deigned to reveal one of its rarest and most highly treasured secrets, when I suddenly became aware that the soft blue waters of the most magic of all lakes lay at my feet.

It was early afternoon, and not even an errant catspaw disturbed the polished surface. Little rounded lumps of cloud hung limp in the air, and the azure of the sky was paled by an opalescent film of haze through which, far away to the west across the lake, one could see dimly the blue hills of Northern Nyassaland and Rhodesia. Great rugged mountains, dark and forbidding, like giant warriors guarding a sleeping princess, fringed the lake on either side, and stretched as



Bird's-eye view of the Nyassa-Kilwa area.

Drawn by the Author.

T signifies Aerodrome.

far as eye could see to the south, where, in the horizon, land, water, and sky lost individuality, and were blended in a pearly-hued nothingness.

At first I decided to call a halt, but the chief headsman of the porters told me we must hurry on because of the clouds that sometimes settled down very rapidly and obscured even the path.

In my exalted frame of mind the singing of the porters and the ribald jests of the white mechanics grated somewhat on my nerves, and I decided to climb to the summit of the mountain, some two hundred feet above, in order to get away from the noise and enjoy the scene to its full capacity. Telling Maganga that I should rejoin the column in fifteen minutes, I started climbing up through the heath and bracken, and in a short time came to a gap in the forest that revealed, if anything, a more beautiful view than the first. But since leaving the path an extraordinary change had come over the weather. The sun still shone, but numerous black and heavy clouds had appeared, apparently from nowhere, and were now hanging over the lake or resting on the higher peaks to the south. A particularly large one seemed to be floating rapidly towards my own mountain-top, and—fool

that I was!—I sat there idly watching it and the beauty of the lake below. Suddenly the cloud seemed to lose its shape, and immediately a heavy, wet, impenetrable mist fell like a blanket from the sky, blotting out the sunshine and the hills and the lake, and making everything so dark and dense that in a second or two I could hardly see a yard ahead of me.

It was a horrible sensation. I had been sitting within a few feet of a precipice which had a sheer drop of at least a quarter of a mile. Dare I attempt to retrace my steps to the path and run the very considerable risk of losing my way! I had nothing to tell me my bearings, but many months of flying had given me a sixth sense for finding direction. Deciding on immediate action, I turned from what I thought was the edge of the cliff and commenced very gingerly to climb down, hanging on to the tough bracken and feeling the way with my feet. I had progressed about ten yards when I began to realise that the ground was much steeper there than the place which I had first ascended. I must wait for the cloud to lift after all. Then, without a second's warning, I felt my feet slipping. Fiercely I dug into the roots of the undergrowth

with my hands—I screamed with terror—nowhere could I find anything that would hold and check my fall. At last I struck the root of a tree, but it had passed before I could grip my bleeding fingers round it. I was gathering speed—it would be only a matter of seconds now before I reached the cliff! Once more I screamed—and then came a sudden jerk round my shoulders and a sharp pain under my arm.

I believe that after that moment I must have lost consciousness, for I have only the dimmest memory of Maganga climbing down the steep face of the cliff and helping me slowly up to safer ground. By that time the cloud had passed, and, looking down, I realised the ghastly death that would have overtaken me but for the lucky fate that had ordained I should be wearing over my shoulders a Kodak, with its case and strap. When I started slipping the heavy camera trailed behind, and it had finally caught on an old tree-stump and pulled me up *within six feet* of the vertical face of the precipice! Maganga, who had left the convoy to warn me about the approaching cloud, had heard my screams, and at great personal risk made his way to my side just in the nick of time, for the

strap was chafing badly with my struggles to break free. Needless to say I seized Maganga's paw and wrung it with all my might.

Regaining the path, we found that it descended the mountain-side in a series of zigzags, the last emerging on a small tableland similar to that of Tandala. In the centre of this table-land was a large village and a huge porters' camp, where the Yaos were already making themselves at home. After my adventure I was glad enough to sit down and drink a strongly-brewed cup of tea.

In the evening I wandered down to the village. The headman spoke Ki-Swahili, and after numerous salaams invited me to join him in a little dinner. Assenting with a certain amount of trepidation, I walked with him to the village square, where nearly all the inhabitants were squatted in a circle round a dish containing an enormous heap of paste or dough. I was assigned the place of honour, but deemed it wisest to wait till the feeding became general before trying anything myself. Evidently the accepted manner of dealing with the paste was as follows. Each person put his hand into the heap, extracted a piece as large as a tangerine

orange, and then kneaded this in his hand until he had made a little cup. Dipping the cup into a small basin of soup, he closed it, and rubbed the whole thing into a ball—the soup, naturally, being inside. It was then swallowed, with obvious relish.

Bearing in mind that it was my first experience, I made my little ball very well, and the chief quickly recognised that I was quite accustomed to moving in the best society. But I gave myself badly away when I tried to eat it, for in the very act of passing it into my mouth I put on too much pressure, the ball burst, and the sticky soup spurted all over my face! The ill-bred porters laughed until they were helpless, and in the general excitement I retired to my tent with as much dignity as I could screw up.

The headman followed me to express his apologies, and after washing myself I forgave him and asked if he would take a little *chakula* with me. Feeling perhaps that he owed me a revenge, he accepted my invitation, and I proceeded to open a tin of herrings in tomato.

"What are they?" he asked, as I showed him the delectable contents.

"Fish," I replied.

230 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

"But how did they get inside that tin?"

"Ah, yes!" I answered, after a moment's thought, "I was forgetting how dull of brain you people are. Now, when you want some fish for breakfast, I suppose you trot down to the lake with nets and traps and lines, and all that sort of apparatus? You work hard all day in the hot sun, and even when you get your fish you have to clean them and cook them."

"Only too true, master," he answered.

"Yes," I went on. "You're dreadfully out of date. You see, when *we* want fish, we simply get thousands of these tins and sail out to the fishing grounds. In each tin we place a tomato and then lower them over the side. The little fishes come along and eat the tomatoes, which contain medicine that makes them curl up in the tins and go to sleep. Then we pull a string, the tin closes, and is hauled into the boat, and there you are—'herrings in tomato'; or perhaps 'tomatoes in herring,'" I added as an afterthought.

He was very much impressed, and he tackled them with far more relish than I had done his beastly paste and glue. The next course was plum-and-apple jam. At first sight he did not

like the look of the sticky green-blue jelly (I have met soldiers who did not, for that matter!). But when I finally persuaded him to take a little on his finger and touch his tongue, he changed his views. His mouth widened into a grin that stretched from ear to ear, his eyes bulged till they nearly left their sockets, and without so much as asking my permission, he put his hand into the tin, scooped out the whole contents, and transferred them to his capacious maw. After he had licked out the tin he called for his wife and children, and they were permitted to do likewise. For all I know, that tin is still rolling round Africa, passing from tongue to tongue like some sacred and wonderful fetish.

That night was the coldest I had spent for nearly two years, and in the early morning I was not at all surprised to find the ground white with frost and a thick layer of ice in my water-bottle.

Immediately below the tableland was an immense crater-like hollow, over four thousand feet deep, and the cliffs that formed it were practically perpendicular. The path had been hewn and blasted out of the face of the cliff, and there

232 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

were places where only six or seven inches separated the feet of the traveller from the precipice. Nerve-racking as it was for us, imagine the poor porter, carrying a load of nearly sixty pounds on his head, feeling a way down the frozen slippery ground, with only one free hand by which to steady himself.

All our supplies of petrol had been carried to Njombe through the pass by porters, and it may be imagined that from the niggers' point of view it was not the kind of trip they would make for pure pleasure.

As a matter of fact these poor devils had protested very strongly, not just because of the actual work, but because they did not see why they should wear out their bodies carrying great heavy tins of *water* from Nyassa to Njombe, when there was already at the latter place an excellent supply of this desirable liquid. The water they had to carry was not even good, it did not smell right, and it did not slake the thirst—they had tried some. Apparently, one particularly trying day things came to a climax, and there can be no doubt that the whole convoy would have “downed tins” and deserted had it not been for a

brilliant suggestion made by one of their number. Briefly it was this. A mile or so from Njombe there was a small stream containing excellent water. Why should they not empty their tins on the mountain-side, climb the pass with light loads and lighter hearts, and then fill them up again just before they arrived at their destination? The white man in charge of the convoy was sick, so who would be any the wiser, while all would feel very much the happier! The idea was hailed with acclamation; the petrol was emptied over the cliffs, and according to plan the tins were refilled at the stream. Carrying their loads into the depot some time later, with a magnificently assumed air of innocence, they enlarged on the trials of the journey, shedding tears as they described the climb up from the lake in the scorching sun, the roughness of the road, and the weight of the tins.

It was not until we came to fill the tanks of the machine that the trick was discovered, and the tears that were shed then by those identical niggers were sufficient to turn Lake Nyassa salt.

Sometimes we passed under waterfalls all

decked with icicles, or entered wonderful fern-hung rock grottoes; sometimes we crawled so near to the cliff edge that we turned almost sick with fear and had to wait a while till our nerves steadied. Glad indeed were we to reach the bottom of the gorge, through which a much-swollen river surged and boiled. For nearly a mile we followed its banks through a jungle of ferns and rank elephant-grass, and then we came to the base of the crater cliffs once more. Our terrible climb down, then, had been in vain; before reaching the lake we would have to ascend nearly as high as our last night's camp! Our spirits sank as we gazed up at the great wall of granite, three thousand five hundred feet in height. But with a dogged determination we tightened our belts and commenced. It took us four strenuous hours to conquer it, but when we finally reached the summit and gazed down on the lake it was well worth while. But there was now no desire to rhapsodise: we had an intense desire to *get there*, and, with the path leading downhill, we lost no time.

It was an extraordinary experience. Every minute brought us fifty or sixty feet nearer

sea-level, and the difference in temperature was very noticeable. Soon we commenced to shed our coats and other garments, until at last we had nothing left but our trousers and shirts. Even these quickly became saturated with perspiration. It was exactly like entering a Turkish bath.

Half an hour from leaving the summit we found ourselves rounding a rocky bluff, from the edge of which we got our first glimpse of Alt Langenberg. The town consists of about a hundred native huts and a large stone *boma* built on the tiny delta made by the river we had seen running through the gorge. We could see people moving about the "streets," looking like so many ants, and floating on the little bay numerous boats and dug-outs. How delightfully cool the water looked! How we longed to plunge into its depths! Yet only six hours ago we had been shivering with cold and longing for the tiniest ray of sunshine to melt the ice on the path.

The remainder of the journey passed without incident, and finally our feet touched the sand of the delta. We had made our crossing, and, glancing up at the frowning mountain, we

236 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

breathed a prayer of thankfulness that we had not booked return tickets. The Post Commandant, Captain Hill of the K.A.R., invited me to stay with him in his little grass bungalow built on the very edge of the water. How glorious it was to strip off one's clothes and, after a scrub in piping-hot water, dive into the crystal-clear water of the lake: and then lie on one's bed, clad in clean silk pyjamas, and realise that the days of long marching—for the time being, at any rate—were over.

After an early tea Captain Hill asked me to join him on a fishing trip. In a tiny steel boat we rowed out to the mouth of the river, and then he prepared his tackle, consisting of fifteen yards of three-quarter-inch Manila rope furnished with a large iron meat-hook and baited with the kidneys of an ox. Casting this overboard, we waited patiently for half an hour. Just as I was commencing to make the conventional remarks that one always does make on these occasions, the line suddenly tautened and the boat started to race forward as though towed by a whale.

"For goodness' sake cut the rope," I gasped.
"It's a croc!"

"Croc be hanged!" coolly retorted the captain. "I doubt whether it's even a big fish!"

Big or little, the brute managed to tow us nearly half a mile, and then, as we slowed down, we began to haul. Our prize proved to be a cat-fish weighing eighty-seven pounds, and it was dusk before we safely grounded the boat on the beach near the bungalow and pulled the slimy monster on to dry land.

That night I dreamt I was hanging over my precipice once more, with a cat-fish gripping my leg and an elephant's trunk twisted round my neck pulling me back. I was glad to see the light of day, and hear the welcome news that H.M.S. *Gwendoline* had arrived and that I could embark for Fort Johnston immediately. Our first call was Wiedhaven.

I was delighted to see that the machine had arrived and that it was already partially dismantled, but such a heavy swell was rolling into the shore that it looked as though the loading of it would be a difficult business. So it proved. Time after time the steel lighter in which the various sections of the aeroplane were brought out to the ship was nearly capsized, but thanks

238 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

to the magnificent "lakemanship" of its crew of stalwart Yaos not a square inch of fabric was damaged, and after everything was hoisted aboard by means of the ship's derricks and safely secured, we sailed for the "open lake." The machine was not completely stripped. Only the wings and the engine had been removed from the fuselage, which straddled across the deck like an enormous locust.

A heavy southerly gale blew during the night, and it was a revelation to find how unpleasantly rough this inland sea could be. Most of the passengers, including my worthy Flight-Commander, suffered acutely from *mal-de-lac*, and they were not at all sorry to see the first glimpse of morning, when the wind died down to a gentle zephyr which scarcely served to waft the smoke from our funnel.

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST FLIGHT OVER THE LAKE, AND ULYSSES
UP TO DATE.

WE sighted Fort Johnston early in the morning of the fourth day of our voyage—a few houses half hidden in a low-lying line of palm-trees over which there hung a pale blue mist, suggestive of swamps, mosquitoes, malaria, and a thousand other deadly things. Fort Johnston has a ghastly reputation, and if first appearances count for anything it is a reputation well earned.

It was several days before the machine was off-loaded, transported to the aerodrome and erected; and Hodge and I ran down to Zomba, where I had several long interviews with local residents who were more or less familiar with the district of Portuguese East Africa, now in enemy occupation. The Germans had made their headquarters at Old Mwembe — a Portuguese

240 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

military post 100 miles east of the lake and 70 miles south of the Border, and the centre of a district lately ruled over by a very hot-headed and rebellious old gentleman named Mataka, who, like his father before him, had been a very nasty thorn in the side of the Portuguese. The Germans had persuaded Mataka to take up arms against his old enemies, and at Mwembe it was reported that he was gathering all his warriors about him in preparation for a general advance into Portuguese East. Hun patrols had pushed south as far as Mtonia, on the border of Nyassaland, and the General ordered that we should carry out a reconnaissance over this place just to see if the enemy was preparing to hold it in force. The Fort Johnston aerodrome was a particularly bad one, consisting entirely of loose sand; and although on his trial trip Hodge "got off" and landed decently, neither of us would have been much surprised if we had crashed the morning that we went out together on our first reconnaissance. As a matter of fact we just managed to clear the palm-trees; but once in the air the machine flew better than it had ever done before.

With the altimeter reading 2000 feet we

turned due north, and soon we had water only beneath us; for it was Hodge's intention to cut across one corner of the lake and fly up the coast. It made me feel uncomfortable to look down into the brown muddy shallows and think of the countless crocodiles who would benefit by a forced landing.

We were just about a mile from the shore when the sun suddenly appeared over the mountains, and immediately we began to experience the most terrifying bumps. One of them nearly put the machine into a spin, and it took Hodge all his time to correct it. I had to hold on like grim death the whole time (I had no belt) for fear of being thrown bodily out, and I was vastly relieved when the air gradually settled down once more.

We hugged the coast for nearly forty miles, and then decided to turn inland. The mountains still towered well above our heads, however, and as the "Old Bee" refused to climb another inch, we had to make for a small gap between two very high peaks, through which it seemed that the machine might possibly fly. It was barely 100 yards across, and, bridged by a thick bank of cloud, it looked like the mouth of a brilliantly

illuminated grotto, for on the other side of the mountains the sun was shining brightly. As the densely-wooded cliffs and ravines came swiftly nearer, we realised that it was going to be a very near thing. The gap was so narrow that if we were not able to fly through because of our height there would be no room to turn, and we should collide with the cliffs or dive into the trees. My tongue parched in my mouth as I realised the horrors of the situation, but looking back I saw that Hodge was grinning optimistically. A few more seconds and we entered the funnel-mouth of the gap: the tree tops were so near that I could see the leaves. The cloud above cast a dark shadow over everything, but through the gap I could see the blue sky and the sun-bathed veldt beyond. Nearer and nearer it came. The grey granite walls closed in as did the magic sea-cliffs on Ulysses and his crew. Would we get through before they clashed? Our speed seemed to increase as the ground came nearer. A big black tree suddenly stood out in front—Hodge zoomed it as a horse would take a hurdle. Still nearer came the cliffs; . . . for a second they seemed to waver and then stand still, . . . and then they quickly began to re-

cede, the trees began to sink swiftly and become less distinct, the cliffs rolled away—and suddenly the sun emerged and bathed the wings of the Old Bee with gold, transforming her into a marvellous yellow dragon-fly. *We were through!*

For twenty miles or so we now flew over a forest-clad tableland, intersected by numerous flashing streams, and patched here and there with native cultivations. Elephant tracks ran in all directions, and we were not long in sighting a small herd of these enormous beasts dozing peacefully in a shady river valley. They fled precipitately at our approach, and it was an extraordinary sight to see them dashing through the dense forest—a clearly-marked path appearing behind each of them. We had no difficulty in recognising the international border between Nyassaland and Portuguese East, blazed across veldt and mountain in an unwavering mathematically ruled line; but apart from that, there was not a single feature, natural or otherwise, that we could identify on the “map.” We struck a road, however, and this finally led us to Mtonia, the place we had to reconnoitre. There was no sign of the enemy, and we followed a road that led north, until fifty minutes later we sighted

244 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Unyango, a small settlement at the foot of a rugged granite hill that rises nearly 1000 feet out of the plain. Two or three white men skedaddling swiftly into the bush indicated the presence of a Hun patrol at least, and this was confirmed when we came down to 400 feet and saw fifty or sixty askaris hiding under the trees and firing occasional shots into the air. Unfortunately we had no bombs, for we had been forced to carry extra petrol and refill the tank as before, and after making a sketch of the camp we turned for home.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURE OF THE BICYCLE.

WITH a strong wind in our favour we reached the Livingstone Mountains in sixty minutes, and we calculated that we should just have sufficient petrol to see us back safely to Fort Johnston. Just when we were in the ruggedest part of the mountains I suddenly smelted petrol, and looking anxiously forward saw that the petrol pipe was leaking badly near the carburettor. It was impossible to reach it with my hand because of a projecting ledge: the only thing to do was to climb out of my seat, and get in again head first. This meant, however, getting out on to the plane and climbing over the red-hot exhaust pipe, which, as I have said before, runs down the gunwale of the fuselage. If my clothing caught fire, the petrol, which was streaming along the floor, would soon do the same, and

there would be a horrible explosion. Somehow or other, however, I managed to get my hand on the pipe and to hold it there for a few minutes before the last drop was exhausted. Then, of course, the engine stopped, but by that time we had crossed the mountains, and were within gliding distance of the lake-side, where, in a maize field, Hodge made a magnificent landing. A huge crowd of niggers soon collected, and they informed us that the nearest bit of civilisation was Malindi Mission, nearly fourteen miles farther south, and six miles from Fort Johnston. To walk there in the blazing sunshine did not seem an attractive proposition, particularly as I had burned my knee on the red-hot exhaust pipe. We were just making up our minds what we should do when suddenly we heard a most peculiar noise, like a jangling of numerous tin cans and iron chains, and there appeared, riding down the narrow native road, a nigger on an extraordinary-looking vehicle—a bicycle of the type ridden by our ancestors, possessing an enormous wheel in front and a tiny one behind. Its ancient and tottering frame was reinforced with pieces of bamboo tied up with string, and the noise emanated from

the unoiled bearings and the various odd pieces of metal that hung out loosely here and there. The man dismounted, leaned his machine against a tree, and with an indescribable air of swagger came up to the aeroplane to compare professional notes. While he admired our mount we admired his, and after looking at it for a minute or two Hodge said: "Thank Heaven, just the very thing!"

In spite of my persuasion Hodge gallantly refused to leave his aeroplane, but with a noble spirit of self-sacrifice insisted that I should take the bicycle and ride to the mission.

With his help, therefore, I climbed on to the crazy saddle, and, amid the loud laughter and sarcastic remarks of the black multitude, started down the road. With all due modesty I may say that I rode it very ably, and thinking that I would make every one aware of the fact, I ventured to look back and wave my hand in farewell. Unfortunately, just at that moment the road became very sandy; the whole machine suddenly side-slipped, and I was thrown head foremost into a particularly thorny patch of bush. Two forced landings within fifteen minutes is rather trying for one's nerves, and I think my

248 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

readers will forgive me for knocking down a great burly nigger who stood in the road shrieking with laughter. I felt considerably better after that, and set off once more. I must have made an extraordinary sight, dressed as I was in flying kit, a leather cap and goggles on my head, a ragged old stocking round my neck, and two days' growth of beard on my chin. No wonder the natives flew terror-stricken into the bush as I rattled along through their villages. On the whole it was a very thrilling journey, but the most thrilling incident came just as I caught sight of the little Mission Church among the trees a mile or so away. Putting on an extra spurt, I dashed down a fairly steep hill, banked neatly round a turn at the bottom, and then saw to my horror, cutting straight across the road, a deep but narrow gully, three feet across. It was no use attempting to slow up, there were no brakes, and I had no desire to do another side-slip into the bush, so I did the only thing a respectable airman could do—I carried on; pedaling away as fast as I could, I reached the edge of the gully, whistled through the air, landed on the other side, and went on without going off. A minute or so later I arrived

Wonderful Adventure of the Bicycle. 249

at the Mission, and by means of a motor-boat crossed the lake to Fort Johnston, where I landed only half an hour after we had been reported missing.

Mechanics and supplies of petrol were immediately despatched to the machine, which was found to be absolutely undamaged, and a day or two later the Old Bee¹ arrived safely at Fort Johnston once more. Needless to say, Hodge refused to believe my story of the leaping of the precipice. Among airmen there is an incredible amount of professional jealousy.

¹ For Hodge and I the Old Bee was not an aeroplane but an intensely living thing, endowed with the mind, the whims and fancies, the dogged determination of a thoroughbred race-horse. Time after time she frightened the very lives out of us—refusing to climb when a fringe of palm-trees blocked the airway, missing over the thickest parts of the forest, threatening to capsize and send us hurtling into the swamps or jagged mountain-sides. Yet never once did she betray the trust we placed in her.

Her "bones" now lie rotting on the veldt just south of the Rovuma, a twisted heap of rusty wire and shattered steel that the lizards and the snakes have made their home. But her soul—if I know anything—still flies on through the magic African air—joyous and immortal.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW WE SETTLED OLD MATAKA.

By this time Northey had commenced a definite campaign against the Huns in Portuguese East. Mtonia had been occupied by the 5th South African Infantry, and a battalion of K.A.R.'s was on the way to reinforce them before they pushed out towards Mwembe.

With the object of reconnoitring this last-named place we set out very early one morning, flew up the lake in the starlight and crossed the mountains just as the sun was rising. At Mtonia we glided down and dropped a bag of despatches and mail and then turned due north for Unyango. From this point all information with regard to roads was very vague. We simply knew that Mwembe was so many days east, and we did not know how we should identify Mwembe if we saw it. The whole

country was very wild. A great mass of forest-clad mountains lay to the north, to the east there were hills with bare granite outcrops, patches of dense primeval forest, and a network of deep, swiftly-flowing rivers. There was no sign of human habitation, but we saw many herds of eland, kudu, and zebra, and one small herd of elephant. For an hour we flew over the great wilderness with our spirits sinking lower and lower as mile after mile went by with no sign of the enemy. Then at last we spotted a bright reddish straight line on a hillside—a road. I simply shrieked with joy, for a mile or so beyond I saw with my glasses the smoke-fires and grass huts of a large camp.

But should we have enough petrol to do it? I had already emptied my two extra tins into the tank, and we had been out two and a half hours. Scribbling on bits of paper, we held a consultation, and at last decided that if we had not enough petrol to take us to Fort Johnston we would risk another forced landing on the lake-side. We reached the camp in fifteen minutes. In the centre was the usual stone *boma*, and clustered round were sufficient huts to provide shelter for 2000 men. We flew over

at 800 feet, and for the first minute there was not the slightest sign of life other than that provided by the smoky camp-fires. Then suddenly from a very large hut there appeared a neatly uniformed but very portly white Hun. One glance upwards was sufficient to send him skeltering pell-mell towards a short line of trenches a hundred yards away, but before he reached this haven of safety he was joined by at least 500 niggers, who emerged from their huts like so many ants from a disturbed ant-heap. It was a ludicrous sight, for very much to the Hun's chagrin the natives were outstripping him. It nearly broke our hearts to think that we had no bomb to help him on his way, but we added greatly to the general consternation by diving down to about 100 feet from the ground, while I fired a few shots with my revolver. There was no time to waste, however, and after we had made a rough sketch of the camp and the roads leading from it, the Old Bee was turned homewards. The journey back was the roughest I had ever experienced. For nearly three hours we were tossed up and down like a cork in a mountain torrent, and never for one second was the physical and mental strain relaxed. Through

the Livingstone Mountains the state of the air was simply appalling. On several occasions the machine began to spin, and only Hodge's consummate skill saved us from destruction. Luckily the wind was in our favour, and we finally glided safely down to the aerodrome after an absence of five and a half hours. On examination both tanks were found to be absolutely dry—once more the Old Bee had served us well.

With Mtonia in British hands it was deemed advisable to establish an aerodrome at this place, and two days after our long flight I sailed on the s.s. *Pioneer* for Lungwena Bay, whence a good *safari* path winds through a deep valley in the Livingstone Mountains to the interior. I had little difficulty in finding a suitable site for an aerodrome, although it took 700 strapping Yoa women nearly a week to remove the rank grass and bush and smooth down several enormous termite heaps. Hodge, with Corporal Walker as passenger, left Fort Johnston as soon as I wired that all was ready, and the Old Bee landed at her new home in grand style. Our immediate task now was to prepare a detailed map of the country lying between Mtonia and Mwembe, and as soon as this was ready the British force,

254 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

under the command of Colonel Shorthose (of the K.A.R.), moved off. Information came in that after our flight over Mwembe, Mataka had reconsidered his plans for a general invasion of Portuguese East, and that most of his braves had returned to their farms, to live the peaceful life once more. Shorthose met with little opposition, and the Huns retired swiftly northwards, leaving Old Mwembe in our hands. Once more the enemy was out of the Old Bee's range, and Hodge decided that he would risk a landing at Mwembe, fill up our tanks from a supply of petrol that had been sent out with the British column for that purpose, and carry out a reconnaissance as far north as the Rovuma river, where it was said that the whole German Army was now concentrating. The force occupying Mwembe had been instructed to clear a space in the centre of the camp as soon as possible, to mark it with a huge white calico T, and to light big smoke-fires on our approach.

We left Mtonia one morning during a heavy rainstorm, and after a very rough journey, reached our destination. The "aerodrome" measured only 150 yards by 20 yards; a strong wind was blowing exactly across it, yet Hodge

made a perfect landing, and brought the Old Bee to a standstill one yard away from the trunk of a fat mango-tree. The whole force greeted us with deafening cheers, and our popularity increased as we off-loaded a huge bag of mail and a case of whisky. A few minutes later we left the ground once more, and, taking a north-easterly course, followed for nearly two hours the road along which the Hun had retired. During the whole of this time we had to fight our way through dense clouds and heavy rainstorms, and on several occasions we nearly collided with the great solitary mountain peaks that abound in the Rovuma valley. Not the slightest sign of the enemy did we see, and at last we turned disconsolately homewards. Hodge made another excellent landing at Old Mwembe, and we decided to remain there all night and return to Mtonia in the morning.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CURSE OF THE CROW.

THIS had been the most disappointing reconnaissance that Hodge and I had yet carried out together. Never until now had we returned minus information of some description. Could it be that our wonderful luck was at last changing? I began to wonder if there was something in the crow business after all. No matter where one camps in East Africa, there will always appear, sooner or later, a number of very dilapidated-looking black-and-white crows, which hop about the ground near the kitchen, looking for stray bits of food, and which soon become remarkably tame. There is a superstition among the natives, and shared by many white men, that to kill one of these crows will inevitably bring bad luck. A day or two before we left Mtonia, I went out one morning after a lion that had been reported

in the vicinity, and in addition to my rifle I took with me a revolver, carried in a holster strapped to my thigh. For many miles we tramped over the veldt, but we saw no sign of his Royal Highness. Suddenly, however, one of these dear old crows appeared overhead. A nigger who was with me pointed to it and said—

“Shoot it, master!”

Without thinking what I was doing, I cried “Right-o!” and drawing the revolver, aimed it haphazardly into the sky and fired. To my amazement the crow fluttered down dead to the ground. I felt horribly ashamed of myself. To kill wantonly any living thing that is not harmful, or useful as food, is considered the essence of bad sportsmanship, and I cursed the evil moment of my silliness.

Hodge was really angry when I told him about it, although he realised as well as I did myself that it had all been perfectly accidental.

“That’s the end of our good luck, my lad!” he said pessimistically; and although I still flatly refuse to have any belief in the supernatural, the events that followed are not without a certain amount of dramatic significance.

We left for Mtonia at daybreak, and after a

258 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

terribly bumpy journey landed safely. The machine had actually stopped, just outside the hangar, when suddenly a terrific gust of wind swept down the aerodrome, seized hold of the planes, and lifted the Old Bee bodily over. Apart from a nasty shaking neither of us was hurt, but the under carriage and the propeller were smashed to smithereens.

"Let's shoot another crow!" murmured Hodge sarcastically as we walked to the mess.

While the Old Bee was undergoing repairs, orders came from Northey that Hodge was to fly to Ssongea at the first opportunity; and as all our gear at Fort Johnston was to be shipped back to German East, it was arranged that Corporal Walker should fly with Hodge as passenger, while I proceeded to Nyassaland, and thence by boat to Weidhaven, the port for Ssongea. It took me three days to march to the lake-side, when I embarked on the *Queen Victoria* for Fort Johnston. Here all our remaining stores were loaded on to the *Gwendoline*, and we sailed as soon as possible, arriving at Weidhaven two days later.

Bad news was awaiting me. Hodge and Cor-

poral Walker had left Mtonia, and nothing had been heard of them for seventy-two hours. It was highly probable that a terrible fate had overtaken them both. With the vivid imagination that has ever been my curse, I pictured the Old Bee crashing into one of those terrible mountain cliffs, or spinning down into the giant forest. Even if they were not killed in the actual crash, death in a hundred ghastly shapes would dog their footsteps on the way back to the camp.

On my arrival at Ssongea, I reported to General Northey. There was no news of the missing airmen, but patrols had been sent out towards the Rovuma in search of them. At the aerodrome I found a wire from the Squadron ordering Hodge to send a pilot familiar with the country to Iringa to fly up a new machine that would arrive there shortly. With Hodge missing and Murray on leave, there was no such pilot in the Flight; and although a number of reserve pilots were now on their way by road to Ssongea, not one of them had ever flown in East Africa. Therefore I suggested to the Staff that I should proceed to Iringa myself, and act

260 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

as navigator to Blackburn, a pilot who had been in charge of the Iringa depot for some time, but who was not exactly on the personnel of the Flight.

I left early on the following day by car. On the way to Njombe I was bowled over with another attack of fever, and for two days I lost all interest in life. Maganga, however, pulled me through, and we were able to push on to Njombe on the third day. At Iringa I found Blackburn also suffering from malaria, and it may be imagined that we made a very jovial party. The machine arrived in due course, but Blackburn was too ill to set out immediately. At the end of the week we were overjoyed to hear that Hodge and Walker were safe. They had reached Old Mwembe, the first stage of their long journey, without mishap, but in taking off from this place the Old Bee had played her last little joke. The engine failed a few feet from the ground, and the machine had crashed into a mango-tree with terrific force. Walker had been slightly crushed, but Hodge, with his usual luck, had come off unscathed. They had both to walk the whole way back to the lake, however, and Hodge's

state of mind and temper may be judged from the wire he sent me :—

“ Both safe. Please state if you have any further supplies of dead crows to hand.”

Blackburn at last announced that he felt fit enough for the journey, although, judging from his looks, a trip back to the Base in an ambulance car would have been a much saner proposition. However, the machine was urgently wanted at the front, and, albeit with some misgivings, we climbed in early one morning and prepared ourselves for the journey. Personally, I had no interest in anything except my throbbing head and aching spleen. We left the ground just as the sun was rising, and at first sailed swiftly along over the dense belt of forest that fringes the Little Ruaha river. We had been in the air about five minutes when it began to dawn on me that something was wrong. Although the engine was running sweetly enough, the machine had not climbed an inch since reaching 150 feet. Loosening my belt I turned to Blackburn.

“ Everything O.K. ? ” I bawled.

He shook his head portentously and pointed homewards. Very obviously something *was* wrong. As we turned I noticed that the trees seemed nearer—we were rapidly losing height. The aerodrome was nearly two miles distant; there was not a square yard of open country on the way: had we sufficient height to reach it? The altimeter was reading 100 feet, and the little hand was flickering backwards . . . 90 feet . . . 80 feet . . . 70 feet . . . A big tree suddenly loomed above us. . . . Blackburn banked steeply and avoided it, only to find another behind. . . . I saw the great fat trunk of a baobab 100 feet away . . . we dived steeply . . . there came a terrific crash . . . the starboard plane whizzed over my head like the sail of a windmill . . . and then came a great darkness. . . .

When I regained consciousness my first sensation was that of being very wet and cold. I discovered that the tank, on which the observer's seat is fixed, had burst, and that the lower part of my body was drenched in petrol. I was pinned down by the wreckage of the plane, and a broken strut was sticking into my "tummy."

"Are you all right?" Blackburn shouted. I

could hear him struggling to get loose, and at last was delighted to feel his strong grasp on my shoulder.

"Come on, old man, try and wriggle out!" as he commenced to tug at the wires that wrapped me round. "We want to get back as quickly as possible."

There was a look in his face that puzzled me. He seemed hysterically anxious to get me free.

"Is there anything specially wrong?" I asked, and then suddenly the blood seemed to freeze in my veins, for, borne on the warm forest breeze came a sound that is dreadfully familiar to one who has lived in the wilds of Africa—a harsh crackling and spluttering, accompanied by the pungent smell of burning. . . . My God! a bush fire—and to windward of the petrol-drenched wreckage of the aeroplane.

"It's all right!" he reassured me; "only a small fire, . . . other side of the river!" But by the way he fought with those devilish wires I knew that he was deceiving me so that I should not lose my head. The crackling was coming nearer, . . . I could hear the sputter and roar of the wicked yellow flames eating swiftly through the parched grass and under-

264 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

growth a hundred yards away. Like madmen we struggled to break free. . . . Our hands began to drip with blood from wounds made by the frayed wire cables. . . . Beads of ice-cold sweat trickled down my face. . . . In two minutes the flames would reach the petrol. . . . In two minutes. . . . With a superhuman effort Blackburn suddenly levered up the battered plane that was still imprisoning me. I became aware of a delightful sense of freedom. . . . Slowly I struggled out of my twisted seat, staggered drunkenly on to the ground, and promptly dropped in a dead faint. . . .

It must have been nearly half an hour later when I came round once more. I saw that I was lying on the grass, in the shade of a spreading acacia, a hundred yards from the crash. The wind had dropped, and the fire had burned itself out. The pain in my body was very bad, but it did not compare with the agonising ache of my mind. A deep and uncanny stillness brooded over the forest—the stillness almost of death; even the bush-cuckoos and the toucans were silent; not the chirp of a cricket nor the buzz of a mosquito disturbed the air's tranquillity.

Blackburn, before setting out for help, had carried me to the acacia, and he had now returned with a doctor and an ambulance from Iringa. A hasty examination showed that I was suffering from malaria, dysentery, appendicitis, and general shock, and after asking the doctor if he did not see any signs of galloping consumption and cancer as well, I climbed up stiffly into the car. At the hospital I made a remarkably quick recovery from the first three named complaints; but as that wretched crow would come and perch on the foot of my bed all day and night long, it was decided that I should be sent down to South Africa for a rest. Thus ended, so far as flying is concerned, my experiences as an airman in East Africa.

The Humours of
Big and Little Game Shooting

**BEING THE FURTHER EXPERIENCES OF
AN AIRMAN IN EAST AFRICA**

CHAPTER I.

MY FIRST LION HUNT.

"YES, you can come along, but of course you mustn't shoot; unless you're accustomed to big-game hunting you can't very well help being nervous—and—well, we don't want our sport spoiled, do we, Buddy?"

"Buddy" was the other South African officer who had helped to wangle two cars for a night's shooting, and the reader will gather that Buddy and the speaker, Koos, were experienced big-game hunters. I felt certain that they were. Ever since I had met them in England, they had found me a very ready listener to their thrilling yarns of the veldt, the forest, and mountains of South Africa. Was there a single known species of antelope they had not shot? a single species of fish they had not caught? a mountain peak they

had not climbed? a river they had not traced to its source? They had shot rhinos, buffaloes, lions, leopards, elephants—everything, and I was indeed honoured to be allowed to watch them destroy a few East African lions.

The cars were Crossley light tenders, and the idea in taking them was to shoot antelope as well as lions, and bring back to camp a good supply of fresh meat.

"You'd better bring your rifle, W——," said Koos, as we prepared to start; "we may not have time to shoot buck, and it will be good practice for you."

Grateful for the unexpected privilege, I ran for my Service .303, climbed into the back of the second car, and settled down comfortably on to my valise.

Leaving Mbuyuni by the western "gate," we drove along the military road as far as Serrengetti, and then struck out across the virgin veldt towards the northern slopes of Kilimanjaro. The ground in the district of East Africa is so flat that the making of a road, except for heavy traffic, is unnecessary. The bush, too, is sparse, and by feeling "one's" way one can drive a car practically anywhere. For

nearly six miles we dodged between baobab trees, acacias, and patches of mimosa, avoiding the tall termite-heaps and treacherous ant-bear holes, keeping a vigilant look-out for signs of game, big or little.

At the edge of a broad, open, grassy space or vlei we stopped, and Buddy and Koos held a council of war. I listened respectfully as they learnedly discussed the various technicalities dealing with the killing of lions, and was struck with the neat simplicity of the scheme they propounded. It appeared that it was now too late in the day to make a drive—particularly as that would involve a certain amount of risk for me. Lions were very fond of zebra—dead zebra for choice; and the best thing would be to kill a zebra, partially disembowel it, tow the carcass across the veldt for a mile or so in order to create a scent, and then lie in ambush until the fierce animals came along to be shot.

So first to kill a zebra. Could anything be simpler? The Serrengetti plains swarmed with these beautiful animals, and only that very morning when returning from an air reconnaissance we had flown low over a herd of

272 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

something like 500. We climbed back into the cars and started to move slowly through the bush, straining our eyes for the first sight of a herd.

But the law of perversity ruled that we should see no sign of our desired prey—every specimen seemed to have migrated round the slopes of the mountain. At four o'clock, however, the driver of one of the cars spotted a big eland bull standing quietly grazing in a glade in the bush.

"Stop," cried Koos, in a steady well possessed voice; "I'd better bowl that old thing over. Won't be as good as zebra, but it'll be better than nothing."

With intense admiration, for my own heart was beating wildly, I noticed how cool the fellow was. Dropping on one knee, he raised the rifle to his shoulder, aimed in the direction of the grazing animal, and fired. I saw a little puff of red smoke on an ant-heap half a mile away.

"Range jolly difficult to judge in this light," he muttered, as he adjusted the sight and reloaded.

Once more, I waited breathlessly. Bang !

A large twig dropped from a tree a few yards to the right of the eland, and the animal hearing it started suddenly, then bolted madly into the bush.

"That blank blank boy of mine never cleaned this rifle, I'll swear. I'll break his blank blank neck when I get back. Suppose you think it quite a good joke, W——?"

I am cursed with a sense of humour, and there was certainly something in the general situation to excite it. I apologised for the grin that had unconsciously spread across my face, and fell to playing with my rifle-sights.

"Push on," commanded Koos to the driver.

We pushed on until five o'clock, by which time the sun had sunk behind the purple slopes of Kilimanjaro and was printing a farewell kiss on its glowing snow-fields. Then, just as my gallant friends were debating whether we should return to camp, to our unbounded joy we saw at last a large herd of Thompson's gazelle trooping in silhouette across the sky-line.

Both cars stopped immediately.

"Try a shot, Buddy," murmured Koos—"this rifle's hopeless." I was glad that Buddy was to

have his chance. He had once in South Africa shot a running cheetah at 300 yards, so that I knew he must be good. He was cool too—just like Koos—only he didn't kneel. He got behind the car and rested his rifle on the bonnet—took a long and careful aim, and fired.

"Impossible to aim against that damned glare in the sky," he explained as he reloaded. "I'll try and cut 'em off—stalk them."

"Better go with him, W——, only don't fire unless you're certain." I followed Buddy until we came to the thick patch of thorn behind which the antelope had disappeared after the shot.

"Keep round to the right, W——," my companion whispered; "mind don't shoot unless it's a dead cert., or we shall lose 'em this time for good."

We parted, and in a couple of minutes, dodging carefully round a squat mimosa, I suddenly came almost face to face with the herd standing stock-still along a game path—the rams sniffing the air, the ewes huddled nervously together. The largest ram, a magnificent specimen, stood apart from the rest at an approximate range of a hundred yards.

Was it a dead cert.? Well, if it had been a 1-ft. bull's-eye at twice the range, I should say with all modesty that it was. Anyway, I was going to try. I crouched down flat, aimed at the shoulders, and fired!

Without a tremor it sank to the ground stone-dead. It was shot clean through the heart.

Koos did not seem at all pleased when I returned to the car, although I had provided him the possible means of a night's lion shooting.

"Thought you hadn't shot before," he grunted.

"Oh, I've done a fair amount—on the ranges, of course," I replied airily. "It used to be a bit of a pastime of mine as a matter of fact."

"Um! what sight did you use for the buck? Seemed almost point-blank from here. Let's see your rifle—why! ha! ha! ha! you had the sight at 2000 yards!"

It was only too true. In playing with the back-sight to hide my recent mirth I had unconsciously moved the sliding block to the 2000 yards' mark. Had my bullet hit the spot at which I was *really* pointing the rifle, it would have missed the shoulder by a yard at least.

There was now no time to be lost. The buck

276 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

was disembowelled, fastened to the back of one of the cars by a rope and towed for nearly a mile to a peculiar rounded kopje where, the South Africans said, the lion would be most likely to come. At the foot of the kopje we found an open space 50 yards across, and in the centre of it we placed the carcass, after Koos had carefully removed the head, which he said he wanted to keep for a friend.

The cars were drawn close together at the edge of the bush, so that from the driver's seat one could command an excellent view of the bait.

"Usually come about an hour after sundown," said Buddy with the air of the man who knew; "we'd better have some food before the fun starts. Stow a bottle of Johnny Walker in the chop-box—in case of malaria or anything."

"Um," said Koos, "I'm not feeling too fit. Worst of this blank blank fever, never really leaves your system. Which car did we put the box on?"

"Blessed if I remember; let's have a look."

We looked in vain—and thus the ghastly truth was brought home to us. The chop-box, carefully packed with *pâté-de-foie-gras* sandwiches

—cold tongue and the aforementioned medicine—had been forgotten in the hurry to get away. After my friends had exhausted their cuss-word vocabularies in English, Dutch, and Ki-Swahili—I mildly suggested that we might at any rate have a little venison for supper.

“But that will mean lighting a damned fire, you silly ass,” said Buddy. “We’re out to shoot lion—it isn’t a picnic.”

“Obviously,” I retorted,—“or we might have brought something to eat.”

“Expect will have to,” put in Koos. “It’s rather hard on the driver. I told him not to bring any food, as we should provide that. Come on, let’s cut some off before it’s dark.”

While Koos and I cut off a haunch, Buddy made a fire. “Best way to cook buck is to do it as we used to do on trek—spear it on little sticks and roast it on the glowing ashes,” suggested the maker of the fire.

The meat was hardly cold, but we cut it up according to directions, and held the small pieces over the hot cinders. The smell, at any rate, was good.

“If only we had some bread or some potatoes,” sighed the chief cook.

278 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

"Or some biscuits or bully beef," lamented Koos.

"Or a nicely done roast duck—with a bottle of fizz to give a flavour to it," I put in more cheerfully. "Oh, shut up, W——. I wish to the Dickens we hadn't brought you!"

"So would the poor gazelle if he were alive. What's it taste like?"

"Damned tough," was the verdict on the first mouthful. "Awful muck," on the second. The third was thrown into the fire, and Koos retired to the car to make his bed.

"Come on, you people, we don't want that fire on all night."

The fire was extinguished, and only then did we realise how horribly dark it had become. The dead buck was absolutely invisible.

"Not much chance of seeing the lions if they do come," I suggested innocently.

"Um!" replied Koos, "thought this would be good starlight, but too much cloud. Wonder if a headlight would keep 'em away?"

"Don't think so," came Buddy's verdict after a minute's contemplative silence. "I've shot them that way in the Limpopo, using an electric flashlight. Let's try one, and see how it looks."

The powerful acetylene searchlight of one of the tenders was lit, and its beam trained on the carcass, producing a most ghostly effect.

"Beam too narrow—better have another lamp going."

The second lamp was lit, and the two beams so trained as to converge on the bait, which now showed up clearly as a piece of chalk.

"Get into your positions," commanded the chief hunter. "I'll stay in this car, and you two had better share the other."

Somehow or other I could not help noticing that the voice of Koos had lost much of its enthusiasm. The malaria must have got him bad, poor chap, and I proffered my quinine bottle. He wouldn't take any, however.

"Makes your nerves shaky," he said, as he shook his head and pulled the blanket well up to his shoulders. "Hello! what's that noise? Jove! a lion already."

I listened intently. One of the most wonderful things about these experienced game hunters is their ability to hear and distinguish between the sounds of various wild animals at tremendous distances. Personally, I had never known the bush so quiet—not a hyæna, jackal, cricket or

280 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

frog disturbed the stillness of the night. What wonderful ears Koos had!

"Can't you hear it? Listen, there it goes again!"

This time I did hear a deep booming sound, like that of a distant aeroplane, but coming rapidly nearer. Louder and louder it grew, then suddenly it stopped.

"Lions be damned!" yelled Buddy, clapping his hand to his face. "It's a blank blank mosquito as big as a dragon-fly." It was indeed a mosquito, and there were others.

Not one of us had thought of bringing nets, and the insects fell to the fray as though they fully appreciated the unfortunate fact. I had no idea how painful the little brutes could be.

By this time we had given up all idea of resting. "Smoke's the best thing to keep 'em off, Koos—let's light the fire again."

The fire was lit, but it only served to keep them off if you sat to leeward of it, when the fumes of the damp wood were infinitely worse than the mosquitoes. Another fire was made, and then another and another, until at last a ring of smoke and flame stretched round the cars, in the centre of which ring we sat, practically immune,

not only from the insects, but, alas ! as I suggested to my companions, from lion as well.

They did not seem very disappointed, however, and within half an hour they were both curled up under their blankets fast asleep, their snores alone sufficient to keep the King of Beasts at a goodly distance. Personally, I did not sleep, but lay there pondering on the ways of men and beasts, until the Lord High Chancellor of Day crept up the Eastern sky, and placing a circlet of purest gold on Kilimanjaro's snowy head, acclaimed his splendid majesty to the waking earth.

CHAPTER II.

SOME SMALLER EXPERIENCES.

MR CHERRY KEARTON once told me a lion story, which he assured me was true. Although the African bush is usually very flat, occasionally there are narrow winding watercourses or *nullahs*, which are quite invisible from a distance of a few yards. Cherry was out to shoot meat for the camp and had wandered far afield.

Suddenly his boy gripped him by the arm.
“Look! *bwana*—a lion.”

Sure enough, about 150 yards away, the head of a very large lion was visible above the level of the ground, its body evidently hidden in a *nullah*.

Cherry, who is a famous shot, fired, and the head disappeared.

“It is dead,” said the boy, rushing forward.

But hardly had he started than the animal suddenly rose again.

"Darned funny," muttered the great naturalist as he reloaded and fired. Once more the head disappeared. The two men waited. In a minute it rose up as full of beans as ever. Again Cherry fired—again the head bobbed up. . . . After the seventh shot, however, no further sign of the lion was seen, and very gingerly they crept forward. *Lying stone-dead in the nullah were seven lions.*

This story reminds me of an experience I had at Iringa. I saw a very fine giant bustard (or paa) feeding at the edge of the aerodrome, which, by the way, during the rainy season was covered with long grass. Getting my shot-gun I prepared to stalk it. Fifty yards from the bird was a thick bush. If I could manage to get behind that unnoticed, a delicious dinner was assured me.

It looked fairly easy, and after I had camouflaged my helmet with several wisps of grass, I commenced to crawl on my stomach over the wet swampy earth, taking advantage of every scrap of cover, stopping sometimes to see if the bird was becoming nervous, or to

remove a grass tick from my neck. At last I got within a few yards of the bush which now hid my prey from view. The bird was mine. For a second I rested, and then started again for the bush.

Then suddenly I noticed something *brown* scarcely twenty yards away. It was moving slightly. *By Jove, a reed-buck!* Here was more worthy game than bustard! Could I kill it with my shot-gun?—rather. The head was hidden by the grass—evidently the animal was crouched in a “form,” a favourite habit of this species of antelope. If I aimed low enough I would be bound to kill it. I raised the gun to my shoulder and pressed the trigger.

Immediately the animal rose up and up until I began to think it must be an eland I had fired at. It was not, however. The brown thing I had seen happened to be the *hump of the ox* that Supplies had sent down from their depot as a week's rations for my porters. Pending the consumption of last week's meat it had been turned out to graze, and the unfortunate beast now turned round and stared reproachfully at me, as much as to say, “Well, you might have let me have my last day's

meal in peace," then it went on quietly grazing. The little leaden pellets had had about as much effect on its tough skin as they would have had on the walls of a tank.

I felt exceedingly foolish as I walked back to camp, and my fame as a shooter of oxen spread far over the land.

I had one very thrilling experience at Iringa. I have always had an intense horror of snakes and scorpions, and never did I venture to turn into my bed before ascertaining that nothing in the creep-crawling line had slipped in first. I had formed the habit of going to bed fairly early, tucking in my mosquito net, and reading by the light of a Dietz hurricane lamp placed on a table by my bedside.

On the night in question I had partaken of a particularly good dinner, and the rum ration for once had proved to consist of rum. After a quiet smoke with my Flight Sergeant (I was the only officer at the station) I bade him good-night and walked to my hut. How cosy it looked! The bed had just been made, the mosquito net hanging exactly as I liked it,

tucked in all round but for a small space at the foot of the bed by which I should enter. What a treasure my boy was! The lamp, burning brightly, was in its place, and alongside it my beloved Decameron—a book I read so diligently that Maganga had once asked me if it was the Bible.

The gentle night breeze blowing through the ventilation holes made the place delightfully cool, and I quickly undressed and prepared to get into bed. Lifting the net I knelt on the blankets inside, which I tucked in after me, then put out my hand to adjust the pillows . . . and nearly died of utter horror, as I saw some glistening object move slowly up the side of the net. I leapt back . . . *it was a snake or a scorpion*, and I had nearly put my hand on top of it.

For a second or so I could hardly move—my hair stiff and a cold dew oozing from my skin—then my presence of mind returned.

“Good gracious, how utterly absurd—a snake—a scorpion? and Maganga had just that minute made the bed!—preposterous.”

I moved cautiously up the blankets—it was

still there, moving, yet it had not apparently changed its position. I looked more closely, and then with a scream of terror I shot out of the curtain like a jumping bean!

"Maganga! Maganga! *nyoka!* *nyoka!* (a snake—a snake), *lete bunduki!* (bring the gun)." I stood at the threshold of the hut trembling like a half-drowned dog. It was a snake—my closer examination had revealed the scales of the beastly thing.

I will give Maganga credit for being a very brave boy. With no other armament than a stick he approached the bed, turned aside the net, and looked under the pillow.

"No snake, master. You see me make bed only few minutes ago, *Hapana nyoka*"—and then with an African's candour he gave what appeared to him to be the explanation. "Master drink plenty *pombe*¹—he see snake when no snake." I promptly seized him by the wool and kicked him out. Somewhat reassured, all the same, I returned and examined the bed once more; then I saw in a flash the explanation.

¹ Ki-Swahili for any alcoholic drink.

288 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

It was the shiny leather hemming of my Wolseley valise, and the "scales" were the shadows of the meshes of the mosquito net thrown by the lamp. The bed moving with my weight had completed the terrifying illusion of a living snake.

CHAPTER III.

MY SECOND LION HUNT.

I WILL call him Bill, otherwise, if he reads this, I shall have to change my address. Bill was an enthusiastic hunter; he longed—oh! how he longed—to shoot elephant, buffalo, lion, rhino, and leopard—but then—"he never had the luck." He passed a week shooting elephant, and came back with a jackal skin; he spent night after night in a tree in Serrengetti, shooting lion, but if by any chance one came, the light was always bad or his rifle jammed at the critical moment. He did so want to be known as a big-game hunter. He had the gift of the gab—and liked nothing better in the world than a good receptive audience. Bill, sad to relate, was not a teetotaller, and it is to be feared that when he went on leave to South Africa he spent most of his time (not to

290 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

mention other things) searching for the aforementioned audiences, which are found—well, we know where. East Africa was then a long cry, thought he, and dash it all, it was just sheer rotten luck that he hadn't bagged that big tusker, and that lion, and that buffalo.

He found his audiences, and the tales he told would have made Baron Munchausen turn in his grave—or at least we gathered so from subsequent events; for one night soon after his return, under the influence of the special brand of lime-juice that made the R.F.C. Mess the most popular place in the country, he thought he was back once more among his boon companions of South Africa and commenced to re-fight his battle o'er again. We did not give the game away until he told how, at Mbagui, he had sat up for lions one night, and—well, as that happened to have been my own identical, original, and absolute copyright experience, we sort of woke him up.

This is the story—my own.

Three lions had been tax-collecting in a local village, and the headman had implored us to shoot them. As Bill happened to be on the spot, he got permission from the C.O. to spend

the night out. He made a platform in a tree, just above the only water-hole in the district, retired to this place at dusk, and returned to camp at sunrise next morning. At that early hour a man's powers of graphic description and invention are at their lowest ebb, and we had a plain tale of two lions who had come to drink, were shot at in a bad light, and disappeared, apparently unhurt.

By lunch-time one of them was certainly wounded, and at tea he told us of many incidents of the night that had previously slipped his memory. What a pity he could not have another try. He was now orderly officer, and I had the temerity to ask the C.O. if I might go myself. The necessary permission given, I withstood the gibes and brilliant witticisms of the Mess until tea was over — then I betook myself to the water-hole.

The headman of the village collected all his braves and placed them at my service.

"Did you see the lions last night?" I asked.

"No, master, they did not drink here,—but they will come to-night."

"But the white man who sat in the tree fired at them!"

292 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

"No, master, it was leopard that he saw. Look, the tracks of them." I knew enough about spoor by then to see that the native was right. Two large leopards had drunk at the water-hole, and these were evidently the animals at which Bill had fired.

"You think they'll come to-night?"

"Yes, master, but it would be good to prepare bait for them. Last night a cow died in my village. My men will drag it to the tree—then the lion will come."

A very cosy platform had been built in the tree, and while Maganga and I hauled my valise up to it, the niggers departed for the cow. A mighty babel announced its arrival. It had been skinned and partially disembowelled, and I imagine that it would have looked quite attractive from the lion's point of view.

About dusk I climbed to my perch. Maganga and the niggers departed, and I prepared for my lonely vigil.

In two hour's time the wind which had been blowing away from the tree suddenly turned about, and I immediately arrived at the painful conclusion that the cow had left this world of

strife many days before "last evening." You could almost see the smell. The familiar *tinnnnng* of countless mosquitoes began to fill the already saturated atmosphere, and when I felt the sharp nip of a red ant on the back of my neck, I knew I was in for a tropical night. Anyway, a full moon was now sailing across a perfectly cloudless sky, and I consoled myself with the reflection that if a lion did come my chances of killing it were rosy.

At 10 P.M., just after my third attack of cramp, I noticed signs of movement in the bush, and suddenly there stepped out into the open sandy space where lay the ox, without the slightest suggestion of sound, a jackal, followed quickly by a second and then a third. With their large ears cocked they nervously approached the carcass, stopping every foot or so, sniffing the air and listening intently, as though they knew they were trespassing on the King's larder. It was a wonderful picture; cut out in jet black against the white river sand, the bright tropical moon edging their bodies with silver, moving in little electric jerks, they looked like creatures of fairy-land dancing to the magic music of elfin pipers.

294 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Suddenly one of them made a lightning rush for the ox and commenced to tear savagely at the flesh. Quickly it was joined by the second, while the third remained motionless, straining every one of its acute senses to detect the presence of the enemy. Whether it was rewarded for its duties as sentry I cannot say—for just at that moment my helmet fell from the platform and they melted into the black shadow of the jungle.

Musing on the savage beauty of the scene I closed my eyes. . . . When I opened them again it was with a gasp of terror,—for there, sitting serenely in front of the ox—*was an enormous lion.*

Silently as my trembling limbs would permit I reached for my rifle. Horrors! *It was not there!* . . . A noise of breaking twigs—and another monster appeared, moving ghostlike to the first and sitting down politely a yard on its right. Quickly came a third and a fourth and a fifth, until soon the ox was surrounded by at least a dozen great lions, each squatting on his haunches, with his long tail lying straight out on the ground behind him. Suddenly Leo number one rose, and after addressing the company with a few

low growls, opened his huge jaws and encompassed the whole head of the ox. Without a sound he closed his mighty jaws, and with a hardly perceptible tug moved away, leaving the carcass decapitated.

Number two now did exactly the same with the forequarter, followed politely by number three, and so on until number six swept up the crumbs, and nothing but a gaunt moonlit skeleton was left. The remainder, taking their disappointment with perfect good breeding, now arose and came slowly but surely towards *my tree* and sat down as before. Their intentions were horribly obvious. With a shaking hand I sought for my rifle . . . it had gone beyond a doubt. I became incapable of speech or movement, . . . my hair stood up like the bristles of a brush. . . . My fate was to be determined quickly. In spite of their excellent table manners, it was impossible for them to conceal the fact that they were very hungry. A big male, evidently the senior, crouched for the spring. I tried to scream, but my vocal chords were paralysed.

There came the noise of a howitzer shell shrieking through the air, . . . a dull pain in my shoulder, and . . . I opened my eyes to find

296 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

Maganga bending over me. *Wapi simba bwana?*
(where are the lions?). I refused to answer.

If you ever meet Bill under favourable conditions
he will tell you this yarn as his own experience.
Don't believe him.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ELEPHANT HUNT.

"**T**HREE were seven, master—a big bull—see his pug marks—four cows and two calves,—look where the little ones trod on the soft clay. . . . Two days ago — they have travelled far by now."

Amani had been lent to me by Capt. C—— of the K.A.R., and as he bore the reputation of being one of the finest elephant trackers in East Africa, I deemed it inadvisable to argue the point. Judging from the wreckage wrought among the trees, one might have imagined that a herd of at least a hundred had been busy there for weeks.

"Um! thought there were only three cows and a bull at first," I said, in my best experienced big-game hunter manner; "didn't notice the calves."

"Bull looks about 60-pounder," I hazarded.
It was a lucky shot.

"Yes, master, between fifty and seventy—see
the marks of his tusks on this tree."

"That's what I was going by." I hadn't seen
them at all to be truthful, but one had to keep
up some sort of dignity with the fellow.

"Think there's any chance of their being
near?"

"Allah alone knows. But it is possible they
may have rested in the next valley. The jungle
is thick."

It was. We were in the heart of the sea of
hills that forms the great escarpment between
the Mahenge Plain and the Central East African
tableland. High above coast level, they are
clothed without break in dense primeval jungle;
tree ferns, giant bracken, thorn, bamboo, and
elephant-grass conspiring to make as effective a
barrier to the progress of mankind as anything
ever invented by the engineers of the Hindenburg
Line. Only the elephant, rhino, or buffalo could
thrive in such country, and these leviathans are
driven there by the force of circumstances—the
flooding of the plain in the rainy season: when
the floods subside they return to easier pastures.

Eighteen miles had we already tramped that day, and it was with mingled feelings that we came across the spoor in the valley of a surging mountain torrent. We could trace the path the elephants made—directly up the face of a steep hill some 300 feet in height.

I had no idea that the largest of land mammals is a mountaineer until we started the ascent of this hill. The gradient I will swear was at least 1 in 1, and although the brutes had trodden down every stick or tree that happened to have been in their way, progress was exceedingly difficult. In places Amani had to hack a way through the thick tangle of broken branches and trampled bamboo that littered the path, and when at last we reached the top we were both exceeding glad to sit in the shade of a verdant tree fern and rest our tortured legs.

Looking over the crest we could see below another valley, deeper than the one we had left, drained by a river of ample proportions.

"We may find them there, master—or perhaps they have climbed over to the second valley—perhaps to the third."

300 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

"Amani, you are as optimistic as a frog in the beak of a stork. I am tired."

"Yes, master. We have indeed made long *safari*. It is good to return before darkness comes. The master is too tired to march further."

"Tired be hanged!" I shouted with sudden warmth. "I'll damned well show you. Find these rotten old elephants for me and I'll kill the lot. Get up! you old woman. I'll walk you off your legs."

We started downhill at such a pace that I quickly began to regret my rashly spoken challenge. The jungle, if anything, was thicker than before, and the elephants seemed to have taken a fiendish delight in laying the many trunks and twisted thorny branches directly across the track, to struggle along which was about as easy as darning a sock with a piece of barbed wire.

At the end of an hour I took pity on Amani, and called a halt.

"Let's have some tea before we continue," I said, with a very enthusiastic accent on the "continue." He made a fire; water was obtained from a spring near-by, and soon my little

aluminum kettle was steaming merrily away. Unpacking my haversack, I placed my scanty provender on the ground, and then——

“Master, master, look—elephants!”

I looked, but it was long before I could see what he was pointing at. It was an elephant right enough, and I—we—or rather Amani, had guessed the number, sex, and age of them accurately. On the opposite side of the valley, distant about a mile and a half, cropping the branches from a large tree with their snaky trunks, were five large elephants. Two calves were just discernible above the grass and bracken.

It was a thrilling sight. The tusks of the bull gleamed white in the sunlight, and while Amani quickly packed the gear, I pictured the triumph that would be mine when I marched with them back to camp. No, I wouldn’t shoot the cows—thoroughly unsporting.

Eagerly we took the trail once more. The end of half an hour found us at the river’s edge, but, alas! it was far too swift and deep to permit of our crossing it. The sound of a waterfall struck our ears, however, and we pushed on upstream for several hundred yards until we saw

it—a jagged cliff over which the river threw itself into a giant ostrich plume. The cliff was undermined, and through a dark and water-sprayed tunnel we found our way to the opposite bank, the steep overgrown side of which we promptly tackled.

It was a heart-breaking business. For the first 100 feet it was practically a vertical climb, and our hands were horribly torn by the brambles that ran riot everywhere. Time after time we tried to retrace our steps and try another route, thus losing not only the results of much hard labour, but also many valuable minutes. Were the elephants still there, or had they taken it into their idiotical minds to try the branches of another valley? An hour elapsed before we finally climbed over the edge of the cliff, and saw, with unutterable exasperation, that *they had gone*. The sap was still bleeding from the torn branches, and the smell of the brutes hung heavily in the air. The path they had taken led over the crest of the hill through the giant bracken and grass, and with drooping spirits we followed, up and up, until we found level ground—a narrow tableland.

Suddenly Amani grasped my sleeve. "Beware, master, they are near," he whispered.

Like a lane in an old-fashioned town ran the path through the thick vegetation. I cocked my rifle—it was an ordinary Service .303—and crept forward. Then came a sharp turn in the path—and I beheld what I thought at first was the thick bole of a big tree . . . *it was the hind leg of the bull.*

The reader must believe me when I say that I was all for creeping up—killing the brute, and getting the business of cutting off the tusks over before dark. Amani thought otherwise. Seizing my wrist, he pulled me sideways through the bracken for twenty yards or so, where was a young sapling the thickness of my arm.

"Climb that, master—then if they charge you will be safe."

Wondering how he had thought that out all by himself, I did what I was bid and climbed hand over hand, until the beastly thing began to bend with my weight. I paused, swung myself round, and gripping on to the flimsy wand with my knees and fingers, looked over the top of the jungle. Thirty yards away I could

see the trunk of the bull twirling backwards and forwards. Only a smallest fraction of its head was visible, but that was enough to enable me to calculate the vital spot.

Although my limbs were trembling to a certain extent (the wetting I had got under the waterfall had brought on a slight attack of ague), I felt remarkably cool and self-possessed. Amani passed up the gun,—with an effort I brought it to my shoulder and prepared to take aim—then suddenly I realised how utterly selfish I was. Supposing I fired and they did charge, what chance would poor Amani have lying there on the ground? Poor fellow, doubtless he had a wife and family—perhaps many wives and many families—while I was but an unencumbered bachelor. Was it worth the risk—for his and their sakes?

“Shoot, master, quickly, or they will get our wind!”

Immediately I became the egotistical, self-centred, perfect English sportsman once more. Gripping the rifle firmly, I got a bead on the brute’s brain, and pressed the trigger; but even as I did so I felt my tree give way—with the crack of a pistol it snapped—and I was precipi-

tated headlong on to the central regions of the recumbent negro. But his cry of alarm and fear was drowned in the thundering din that followed. Trumpeting shrilly, the elephant charged past, the great feet of the big bull grinding the hard-baked soil to dust within six yards of where we were lying. I felt that the Day of Doom had come. Surely one of them would get us; . . . how remarkably cool I felt. . . . Poor Amani, . . . how frightened he would be; . . . doubtless he was thinking of his wives, . . . counting his children perhaps.

I felt his grip at my sleeve once more.

"Get up, master, quickly; they have passed, we may get them yet."

"Yes, of course—yes—but are you sure you're alright—not hurt?"

He dragged me up, and with my blood afame with the utter joy of the chase, I ran to the edge of the hill—in time to see them go down.

It was an extraordinary sight. The gradient was so steep that the big ones did not bother to run—they put their hind legs between their forelegs and literally tobogganed down—big trees snapping in their way like huts before an Alpine avalanche, bushes and saplings torn from

306 Flying and Sport in East Africa.

the ground by their roots and flung aside like wisps of straw. I had a last glimpse of the two dear little babies rolling down head over tails in their parents' tracks — then all was suddenly hidden in the dense red cloud of dust that rose into the air and hung like a merciful protective barrage until my would-be victims were swallowed up in the depths of the valley forest. Somehow or other I was glad that I'd missed.



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